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PARISH SERMONS.

FIFTH SERIES.

BY

HARVEY GOODWIN, D.D.,

DEAN OF ELY.

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PREFACE.

I HAVE published this Fifth Series of Parish Sermons, chiefly because it gives me the opportunity of shaking hands (as it were) with many friends amongst my younger clerical brethren, who have formerly attended S. Edward's Church during my ministry in Cambridge. Nothing is pleasanter to me than to find, as I do, in various parts of England, clergymen who claim acquaintance on the ground of having been frequently amongst my Cambridge congregation in past days. To these dear friends, many of them personally unknown to me, I specially dedicate this volume.

This will explain why I have ventured to insert a sermon entitled, "Farewell to Cambridge." This sermon was composed under some disadvantages, and in several respects was not what I intended it to be; but the conclusion of it exactly expresses

that which I desired to be the characteristic of my teaching, and therefore seems suitable as the conclusion, not of the sermon only, but of the series.

With regard to the Sermons generally, it may perhaps be allowed me to say as much as this. Some have been inserted because I have received requests that they might be published; some because they bear more or less upon subjects now much discussed; and because I thought that it might be useful to shew how in my opinion such subjects may be treated in the parish pulpit, without on the one hand advancing statements which only the pulpit can prevent the hearers from refuting, and on the other losing sight of the grand end of all sermons, the edification of a Christian congregation. Some of the sermons owe their admission to reasons which I deem it unnecessary to explain.

Much has been written of late with regard to Sermons; much advice given to Clergymen both by their clerical brethren, and by their lay hearers; much complaint made of the matter and the manner of ordinary Parish Sermons. It is to be hoped that some benefit may result from the discussion; but it seems to me that one or two points have been too much left out of sight, and upon these

I may perhaps take this opportunity of saying a few words.

In the first place, it seems to me that in the popular discussions of sermons and sermon-preachers, the preacher is regarded too much as a popular lecturer, and too little as the ambassador of Jesus Christ.* It seems to be assumed that the com-

* A very good example is afforded by an article in the *Saturday Review* of April 5, which met my eye soon after writing the passage to which this note is appended. The article is headed "Quotations," and the text of a sermon is treated simply as a quotation, not at all as a message from God and as a pledge that the preacher considers himself as speaking not for himself, but for Christ. Here is the commencement of the article: "We have seen it gravely argued whether a clergyman may lawfully preach a sermon without introducing it with a text. For our own part, we generally wish the text away. It is one of several ingenious devices for turning a man into a finger-post. If the preacher would get up and say what he has to say without more ado, we should listen to him; and if we did not believe what he said, we should at least believe that he believed it, which is the first step towards believing it ourselves. It would be thought passing strange if a barrister addressing a jury, if a member of parliament addressing Mr. Speaker, if a candidate addressing the multitude round the hustings, were each and all of them to begin with a text. Yet there is really no more reason why we should have a text from the pulpit rather than from the bar, the hustings, or the Treasury-bench." And so the writer proceeds much to his own satisfaction. Now, I by no means assert that a text is in all cases a necessity; the Homilies are examples of the contrary practice. I have heard very effective

mission of the prophet in this nineteenth century is something of this kind, "Make My people to enjoy a comfortable half-hour after their prayers," rather than that which was given to Isaiah, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew My people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins," or that which is claimed by S. Paul, when he says, "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us." No doubt dulness is not a desirable quality for a sermon, and the most earnest man may find his efforts thwarted by an invincible tendency to prosiness and an infallible power of producing sleep. Still it is also true that the preacher, who sets before himself as an aim and purpose the composition of a sermon which shall be lively and interesting, may miss his lawful aim by sinking the higher qualities of a sermon: he may become a good popular lecturer at the expense of becoming a weak preacher of the Gospel. I by no means

sermons without texts; and I preached myself without a text the day after the publication of the article above referred to; but what I wish to notice in the preceding extract, is the entire absence of the feeling that a clergyman occupies a position different from that of other speakers, that he is an ambassador of Christ, and that he may very suitably undertake rather to expound the words of his Master than to speak entirely from his own imagination.

disparage all human aids in doing God's work ; but I feel very strongly that the persuasion on the part of the preacher that he stands on God's behalf, and that he has to deliver his own soul, will go far towards putting fire into his tongue and preventing him from uttering dull unprofitable twaddle.

It may perhaps be well to observe also, that although there are undoubtedly preachers who are hopelessly dull, and there are also as undoubtedly some who are undeniably popular, and that in the best sense, still it is not so easy a thing as might be imagined to say precisely whether any given preacher is a good preacher or a bad one. The discussions, to which I have referred above, are by the nature of the case contributed chiefly by persons of good education ; but persons of good education are by no means the majority of society or of ordinary congregations, and the estimates made of a sermon by an educated and an uneducated or very partially educated person respectively will probably be as different as can well be. For instance, in no one point connected with sermons would there be likely to be more agreement than on this, that sermons should be short ; and yet I believe that this view would not meet with acceptance amongst a very large class of

church-going people. Many sermon-hearers take account of length as much as of breadth and depth ; and I was much amused lately by comparing the general demand for short sermons, as put forward by those who discuss the matter in books and newspapers, with the opinion of a man of the middle class, with whom I chanced to be in conversation, and who treated a short sermon as a distinct fraud on the part of the clergyman, practised upon a congregation who had expected better things. I believe that as in the case of length of sermons, so in regard of several other qualities, there would be no very general agreement on the part of those who listen to sermons, if they could all be fairly polled ; or if there should be a general agreement, I doubt whether it would be confirmatory of the views of those who have been most clamorous in print for a reform of the English pulpit.

Let it not be thought that I advocate long sermons ; on the contrary, I believe that much of the objection which has been made to the length of the service in our Churches might be obviated, if the clergy would be careful as to the length of their sermons ; and I believe that with proper care as much may be said in a short sermon as in a long

one. Moreover I am myself a very bad listener, and thoroughly sympathise with those who find it difficult to listen to a long discourse of any kind : and I may add that I think it is an advantage to a preacher to have this infirmity ; it leads him to compose his sermons under the perpetual dread of wearying his people, and this tends to prevent him from becoming prosy, and from saying much, when in reality he has little or nothing to say. All that I would urge is this, that it is doubtful whether the majority of worshippers are so anxious for an abbreviation of our sermons as is supposed : and certainly it is a fact to be noted, that, while from the discussions which have taken place it might be concluded that preaching in the Church of England was at the lowest ebb ; still it is undeniable that as a general rule preaching is a very attractive portion of public worship, and that when a sermon is preached there is generally no lack of congregation.

“The preaching of some good persons,” we have been told,* “is like reading the Riot Act, or reminds one of that ingenious method by which it is said the magistrates of St. Petersburg some-

* Correspondence of R. E. H. Greyson, Esq., edited by the Author of the “Eclipse of Faith.”

times cool the zeal of a mob in that genial climate, —that is, by playing on them with a fire-engine.” This may be as true as it is humorous, but there is another view of the case which is quite as true, and probably more general in its application. In fact it can hardly be doubted that sermons are more popular than ever, notwithstanding their many alleged defects.

Referring again to the discussions upon sermons, it seems to me that account has not been taken sufficiently of the peculiar characteristics and qualifications of individual preachers. There is too much desire to form all preachers upon the same model; whereas one man can do many things which another cannot do, and a style of composition which in one preacher’s hands is pointed and effective may in the hands of another be simply grotesque. Of course it is well to study good models, and it is right to observe blunders that we have made and to correct them; but the most important thing is, in my opinion, to examine the natural advantages with which God has endowed us, and improve them to the utmost. If a man can introduce anecdotes effectively into his sermons, let him do so; if he has a power of argumentation, let him argue; if he has a facility of clear exposition, let

him expound difficulties; if he has abundance of reading and power of quotation, let him quote; and so on: but let not any one think that it is necessary or possible to combine in his sermons all kinds of excellence; let him take his own line, and leave other lines, which he feels are not his, to be occupied by men of different mental constitution.

Let me illustrate what has just been said by an instance. In a very useful work on preaching great stress has been laid upon anecdotes, and it is suggested that every sermon should have at least one anecdote. A clergyman, who I suppose had seen this hint and considered it valuable, carried it out in a congregation, one member of which I chanced to know. The effect, so far as this person was concerned, was most unfortunate; the remark made to me was, "I am weary of these anecdotes: we never can get through a sermon without one."

The great secret of success in the composition of a sermon, regarding it from its literary side, is, I believe, to know clearly beforehand precisely what you want to say. The clergyman must not sit down with his text and his paper, and engage himself with the wearisome problem of diluting

the one sufficiently to make it cover the other ; still less must he stand up in the pulpit for the purpose of performing the more wearisome task—wearisome to hundreds beside himself—of spinning out an ill-digested and empty extemporaneous discourse ; but whether writing or speaking he must know precisely what he wants to say, and then write or speak. Confining myself to written sermons, I would venture to give the following hints as embodying rules which I have found practically very useful.

Choose a subject for the Sunday very early in the week ;* if possible, not later than the Monday preceding. I say nothing about the choice of subject, except this, that I think as a general rule the text ought to be selected from one of the portions of Scripture appointed for the day ; there ought at least to be a manifest connection between the sermon and the rest of the service ; the sermon should be auxiliary to the regular worship, not a detached and independent exercise. But how-

* I have heard of clergymen who prepare their sermons several weeks in advance, which is much the same spiritually as it would be in worldly matters if a housewife should provide bread for her household on the same principle. In each case the food might be unimpeachably wholesome, but it also runs the risk of being unspeakably dry.

ever the text be chosen, let it be chosen early in the week, and noted down in a book kept specially for the purpose. Do not make any remarks upon the text present; let it remain in the mind for a day or two; let it be the subject of consideration in walks, in parochial visits, in the ordinary readings of Scripture, in theological study, in all secular reading, even that of newspapers and magazines. This I call putting the text *in soak*. And it is wonderful what an effect is produced, how familiar the subject becomes, how many new views suggest themselves, how many illustrations occur, how much matter is found gradually to accumulate. It is no exaggeration to say that sometimes a subject which appeared at first dry and hard, or at least difficult to treat successfully in the pulpit, becomes, after a day or two of quiet concentrated thought, so fertile that the difficulty is to know how to compress it. Now it is time to use the sermon note-book: the matter must be arranged; the floating thoughts must be fixed; a scaffolding must be set up for the building, or perhaps it would be a better figure if I said that the skeleton must be formed, upon which the flesh and sinew of the sermon can be superimposed.*

* I have appeared to assume that only one sermon is to be

It is difficult or impossible to give precise rules for this part of the process of composing a sermon. Nevertheless it is a very important part, and upon the proper performance of it will depend much of the symmetry and proportion of the sermon when complete. The notes should not be too long; they should only mark out the general divisions of the subject, and contain memoranda of illustrations; they should not be visible at all in the result, but should take the place of the First, Second, and Third heads, the subdivisions, the heads of application, and the like, which used at one time to form the structure of nine sermons out of ten. I have spoken of the notes as scaffolding, and when the building is complete scaffolding is always cleared away.

Practice will do more than rule in this matter; and I will only give my most earnest testimony to the excellence of the plan, and express my opinion that even experienced preachers would do well not to omit this preliminary proceeding; it

prepared in the week; of course the rules given will apply *mutatis mutandis* to two, but the young clergyman would do well to bear in mind the pithy saying, which tells us that a superior man may with diligence and care write one sermon in a week, that a very superior man may possibly write two, and that any one can write three.

will tend more than anything else to the desirable result of ensuring to their sermons a distinct beginning, middle, and end.

I have spoken of keeping a book specially for this purpose; I mean that this is better than making notes and memoranda on slips of paper to be thrown away when the sermon is finished. Such books form very interesting sermon registers, and perhaps enable a clergyman to mark the progress of his mind from year to year.

But now for the use of the notes, supposed to have been duly prepared. By all means do not use them at once, even though you may have leisure to do so. Let them remain for a day or two, and cast your eye upon them occasionally; your note-book should form an immoveable inhabitant of your library table; and in this way, almost without effort, the sermon will arrange itself in a compact form in your brain. When you at length sit down to write it, write, if possible, the whole at one sitting, or at all events with as few breaks as possible: write fast, and let it never be absent from your mind for one moment that you are writing what is to be spoken and not to be read.

These few hints concerning practical compo-

sition may perhaps be not unacceptable to some of my readers. I am convinced that much depends upon a good method, and that so serious a thing as a sermon ought not to be left to chance; while at the same time nothing should be done which can betray the machinery when the sermon is finished, or leave any trace of stiffness in the composition. So important do I consider method to be, that I should strongly recommend young clergymen to use always the same sized paper, and the same number of sheets, with ruled lines; in fact to adopt blank sermon books, such as those which are supplied by Messrs. Letts and Son, of the Royal Exchange. The reason for this advice is, that by adopting it a clergyman knows precisely, as he writes, at what period of his sermon he has arrived; he knows when he may safely expand, and when he must contract, in order to get all his matter within the limit of time which he allows himself; like a painter he knows the size of his canvass, and knows therefore what size must be given to each part of his picture in order that the whole may be put upon it without confusion. Here is one great secret of short sermons; if Dr. South had adopted it, he might still have complained that he had not sufficient time to write

a short sermon, but anyhow he could not have written a long one.

Of course all such rules as I have given above only touch the externals of the subject; they only assist a man in getting out of his mind in the best way that which is there, and fail utterly if after all there is nothing to be got out. I shall not prolong these remarks by giving hints, which may be found abundantly elsewhere, concerning the studies necessary for the refreshment of the clergyman's mind, and for the supply of matter for his sermons. One remark however I will make with regard to the general mode of treating subjects in the pulpit, which is, as I believe, very important, especially at the present time. Much has been said of late concerning the "free handling" of religious subjects; and though there may be a free handling which shall be little short of absolute irreverence, and shall be shocking to devout minds, and shall tend to make hearts sad which God has not made sad, still we may advocate free handling to this extent, that every clergyman should feel himself bound to defend against all comers, with the weapons of honest argument, any statement which he may make in the pulpit.* Nothing can be more perilous

* In note *w* to his "Mission of the Comforter," Archdeacon

to the cause of true religion than that it should be imagined that clergymen feel themselves at liberty to make conventional statements in the pulpit, which cannot be supported in ordinary controversy: the pulpit should be orthodox, not only with regard to the articles of the Creed, but with regard to science, criticism, history, and whatever other branch of human knowledge may be incidentally brought into discussion: and every preacher should bear in mind that what is scientifically untrue cannot be theologically right.

Perhaps it may be not unsuitable to urge in

Hare quotes with great and deserved praise the following passage from Niebuhr's "Letters to a Student of Philology."

"Above all things, in every branch of literature and science, ought we to preserve our truth so pure, as utterly to shun all false show,—so as never to assert anything, however slight, for certain, of which we are not thoroughly convinced,—so as to take the utmost pains, when we are expressing a conjecture, to make the degree of unbelief apparent. If we do not, where it is possible, ourselves point out defects which we perceive, and which others are not likely to discover,—if, when we lay down our pen, we cannot say, in the presence of God, *I have written nothing knowingly, which, after a severe examination, I do not believe to be true, in nothing have I deceived my reader, either with regard to myself or others; nor have I set my odious adversary in any other light than I would answer for at my last hour*,—if we cannot do this, learning and literature make us unprincipled and depraved."

The spirit of this admirable passage applies to the composition of sermons.

connection with this subject a somewhat more masculine tone of theology than that which frequently prevails. To gain the women to the side of Christ is much, but to gain the men is still more, and as universal experience shews more difficult. The Cross of Christ should be able not only to win the female heart, but to subdue the male intellect. "Thus it has come about," says Mr. Isaac Taylor,* "that sermons are composed and delivered which women eagerly applaud, but which men listen to with far less than thorough satisfaction: they too may applaud, for the preacher is eloquent, and they believe him to be sincere; yet these educated laymen come out of Church convinced upon no questionable point, and they feel that while the slender and soft experiences of female religious life are understood, and are duly treated by the preacher, the hard, the arduous, the perplexing, the titan realities of *man's* course through this difficult world—these strong things are either not grappled with at all, or they are always misunderstood, as a man misunderstands things which he has never seen otherwise than at a distance, or through a mist."

It must not be concluded from this that I wish

* *Logic in Theology, and other Essays*, p. 196.

to represent the pulpit as the proper place for enunciating all truths, or for discussing all doubtful points. It is a very mischievous kind of honesty which leads a man to declare to a mixed congregation, met for the purpose of worshipping the Holy Trinity, his opinions or convictions upon every possible subject of human thought. There is abundance of matter of the most important practical kind, which may very well fill the ministry of the longest-lived minister of Christ, and which may rightly take precedence of more doubtful questions, and of points upon which it may be difficult to convey right views, even if the preacher has been able to attain such views himself. In this matter of course there is room for the exercise of judgment, and that which may be suitable for one congregation may amount to an absurdity when addressed to another. I remember hearing of a clergyman, who, in preaching to a very rustic congregation in a very retired village upon the history of the Ethiopian Eunuch who was returning from Jerusalem reading the book of Isaiah the prophet, commenced his sermon with a discussion of the question whether the Eunuch was reading the original Hebrew or the Septuagint translation: and this is perhaps no very extravagant caricature of many

similar absurdities. Judgment no doubt must be exercised as to the kind of subject which shall be introduced into any given pulpit: all that I wish to urge is, that whether the pulpit be that of S. Mary in Oxford or Cambridge, or that of the simplest village, the preacher must eschew conventional representations, and put forward all that he says in a form in which he believes it to be strictly true, and in which he is prepared to maintain it.

Many other things suggest themselves to my mind in connection with the subject of this preface; but I feel that my preface may easily run into a treatise, and so become unsuitable for the place which it occupies in this volume. I will therefore bring it abruptly to a close with a quotation from Fuller, which expresses a great truth concerning sermons, and which will come as a relief after the remarks which I have made upon the merely mechanical part of the composition of a sermon. "Having brought his sermon into his head," says Fuller of the *Faithful Minister*, "he labours to bring it into his heart, before he preaches it to his people. Surely that preaching which comes from the soul most works on the soul. Some have questioned *ventriloquy*, when men strangely speak

out of their bellies, whether it can be done lawfully or no: might I coin the word *cordiloquy*, when men draw the doctrines out of their hearts, sure all would count this lawful and commendable."

H. G.

THE DEANERY, ELY,
Easter, 1862.

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SERMON I.

THE IMAGE OF GOD.

GENESIS i. 27.

So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.

THIS verse I conceive to be on the whole the most important in the first chapter of Genesis. Probably no chapter in the Bible has given rise to more controversy, or has been a source of more difficulty than this. At first, men imagined that they had in it a revelation concerning the physical history of the world, and that this chapter must be made the basis of science, and all science deemed false and impious which should seem to be inconsistent with it; and this application of the chapter to a purpose for which it never was and never could have been intended, led men (as might be expected) into errors and absurdities. Then science was allowed to pursue her own path, and men began to discuss how far the con-

clusions of science were in accordance with the Mosaic history; and they perceived that interpretations which they had put upon his words were not absolutely necessary, and they modified their interpretation, and so endeavoured to effect a harmony between the word of God in the Bible and the word of God in nature. Thus a great amount of discussion has been raised, and I am far from saying that no good has resulted from the discussion. If there had been no other good result, at least there would have been this, that men have been taught to be more careful in the manner in which they use the Bible; they have been taught a lesson which they may very well apply to the study of Scripture in general—not to be too positive as to the correctness of their own interpretations, and to be very particular in using Scripture for the purpose for which it was intended, and not for another.

For myself, I must confess to taking very little interest in the question, how all the details of this chapter are to be reconciled with the results of science. I think that such reconciliation is a matter more for ingenuity than for edification; and I should not be surprised if it for ever baffled the ingenuity of expositors to give an interpretation, which we could honestly look upon as in accordance with modern views. But I look with indifference upon

this question, because I am quite sure that it never was the design of Almighty God to give us a revelation concerning the mode in which He was pleased to create the world. I look from the details of the chapter to the great moral of the whole, and I see that the great truth is not *how* the earth and the living things upon it were created; but *by whom* they were created, and *why*. They were created by God, they did not make themselves. They were created *in the beginning*; there was a time when they were not. They were created before man, and *he*, last of all God's creatures, was formed in God's own image, and placed upon the earth with authority to make himself lord of all other created works of God. It is not my purpose to enter into the subject now; otherwise I might remark to you that to a people like the Israelites,—who had been living amongst the Egyptians, a nation who debased themselves by making gods of all kinds of animals, worshipping them instead of exercising dominion over them; and who, after being delivered from the Egyptians, came to live in the midst of people who worshipped the sun and moon and the host of heaven, instead of regarding them as lights made by God to rule the day and the night,—the account of the creation given by Moses would be exactly the kind of history fitted for their spiritual

needs. It was not to gratify their curiosity, or to put them ahead of other nations in respect of science, that this first chapter of Genesis was written; no—its end, like that of all other parts of the Bible, was *moral, practical*. It was to teach them their proper standing-place in God's creation, their place as *men*; not made to be worshippers of the sun, but to use the light which the sun dispenses as the gift of God; not made to form superstitious guesses concerning the future by consulting the stars; not made to bow down to four-footed things and reptiles in stupid adoration; but to assert their supremacy as higher beings in God's creation. This, I say, was the design of the first chapter of Genesis; and if it taught the Jew *this*, though it would not give him much, or perhaps any, scientific knowledge, it would give him an amount of wisdom far beyond all science, and of a kind which the history of the world shews that men are very slow in finding for themselves.

I began by saying, that the verse, which I have chosen for a text, is on the whole the most important in the chapter. "God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them;" these words I spoke of as being the most important in the chapter, because the former part leads up as

it were to them, forms an introduction to them. The words contain a very stupendous revelation concerning man; not concerning his physical history (as we should term it), but concerning his moral history; not a revelation concerning the laws according to which his body was formed from the dust, but concerning those laws according to which he was created spiritually in the image and likeness of Him who made him. This great truth, that man was created in God's image, is that upon which the whole Scripture hangs; it was because he was so created, that he became capable of a very fearful fall; it was because he did fall from his high estate, that God sent him a Saviour, and a great one, to bring him back again to the position which he had lost. Hence it is difficult to overrate the magnitude of the truth which the text contains; and even if we do not examine into the meaning of it more closely, if we only take the words "image of God" in their loosest meaning, words so strong must evidently signify a great deal. But it is not well so to take the words; it is better that we should discuss them, and endeavour to ascertain some of the principal points which were intended to be comprised in the comprehensive expression, "the image of God."

This, then, I propose to do, and I shall bring

before you several distinct points which seem to me to be all comprised in the figure "image of God." I say *the figure*, for of course it *is* a figure: to say that man is created in the likeness of God is something very different from saying that one picture is copied from another. In many respects man is very different from God; therefore it is only in certain features that the likeness to God is seen. Let us examine a few of these.

1. And to take first of all the lowest view which can be taken, I think that the image of God may have some reference to that dominion over the earth which is assigned to man, especially as this dominion is given to man in immediate connection with his creation in the divine image. Look at the verse following the text, and there you will see that in immediate connection with the fact that God created man in His own image, it is stated that He gave him "dominion over the fish of the sea, over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." Now this power over the rest of the creation and command to subdue the earth, the meaning of which we can well understand from seeing what mankind have actually done, evidently put mankind on altogether a different footing from the rest of God's works. The trees are commanded

to bear fruit after their kind; the beasts of the earth and the fowls and creeping things are created after their kind; and they are all pronounced very good, all fit for their purpose, no defect or flaw in God's handywork. But man has a different charter from any of these other creatures: like the other animals he is to increase and multiply, but his race are to have a supremacy over all other creatures, not merely the first but infinitely the first, standing upon altogether different ground, holding a delegated authority from God, made by Him the rulers of all other things upon the earth, and so to a considerable extent representing Him the absolute Ruler of all.

2. This supremacy man still has. Looking upon the world as we see it now, and observing that there is one race of creatures upon it, like the rest in many respects, but obviously and confessedly differing from all others in the fact of all others being subject to them, we may well say that this supreme race of creatures are the representatives of God. This however I speak of as perhaps the lowest view, though even this would give to the words a by no means unimportant meaning. There is another view nearly connected with it, to which in passing I will call your attention. In speaking of man as being created in the image of God, one ~~can~~ hardly fail

~~to think upon~~ ^{of} the marvellous intellectual powers with which man has been endowed. ~~I do not know that anything~~ can surprise us more than the marvellous results of human science, the power which mankind have exhibited in scanning the works of God, reducing them to law, detecting the hidden harmony in the apparent confusion of creation, demonstrating the fine adjustment and delicate construction of the material universe: and if the wisdom and power of God occupy the first place in the mind of one who contemplates the heavens and the earth, certainly the second place must be reserved for admiration of the wonderful mind with which man has been endowed, the powers of which enable him thus to study the works of God. Nor is it only in theoretical science that the energy of the human mind shews itself: only look at the face of the world, see how it is covered with human works, ships upon the sea defying the winds and waves, great cities, wondrous buildings, contrivances endless for the increase of human comfort and the gaining of wealth and the abundance of luxury; and when we have thus looked, who will not be astonished at the energy and skill by which all has been done, and who will not acknowledge that the doer of such wonders must have had a very large gift of mind from his Creator; that when God formed

man, He endowed him very munificently with intellectual gifts, and made him worthy of appearing amongst the other creatures as in some sort the representative of Himself?

3. But beyond all this, there is a distinct faculty possessed by man and not possessed by other creatures, and which establishes an infinite difference between him and them. Such mind as the lower creatures have shews itself in whatever we call *instinct*, in a power of providing for animal wants: very wonderful such power is, but still it is altogether different in kind from that power which *we* have, and by which we look back (so to speak) upon ourselves. We are conscious of what we are, we can examine into our own minds, and we can convey to others the thoughts which we have within us. Thus we become conscious of what is due to us as men; we love freedom and feel indignant at oppression,—in fact we are sensible that we are *persons* having *rights*, and not *things* to be dealt with at the will of another irrespectively of our will. And thus it is that we may say of animals, that one is more highly endowed than another, that one animal is sagacious and another beautiful in form and another swift in its motions, and the like; but we should feel that it was sacrilege to make any comparison between the most highly endowed of them all and

man; there is a great, yea a quite infinite gulph, which for ever separates the two.

4. In connection with this you may further notice the great distinction between right and wrong, which belongs to man alone. An animal may be taught that it is not to do certain things, but it is because those things are contrary to its master's wish, not because they are wrong. Some persons have endeavoured to make out, that the distinction between right and wrong on the part of ourselves is quite arbitrary, that we call that right which we find on the whole to be advantageous, and that wrong which on the whole tends to mischief; but the conscience of mankind is against this scheme of philosophy. That the wickedness of mankind has made fearful confusion between right and wrong, and that men very often by their conduct appear to approve of that which they ought not to approve, is very true; and that men may fall by a course of vice into such a condition, that their moral sense shall be fearfully blunted, is also true: but this does not prove the absence of a sense of right and wrong from a healthy mind, any more than the case of ever so many blind men would prove that there was no such thing as sight. No—the general conscience of mankind admits, I think, the truth which is assumed in Scripture, namely, that man, however far gone from original

righteousness, does nevertheless recognise the excellence of what is good, that he delights in the law of God after the inward man, even though he may find another law in his members bringing him into captivity. This sense of what is right and good, which existed in man in his state of purity, and which has survived the fall and forms the very foundation upon which we can build hopes of his restoration to the favour of God, is, I believe, a considerable portion of that which is described as God's image in which man was created. And supposing this sense to have been impaired, as perhaps it may have been, by sin, still the remains of it are the most precious portion of the divine image which has survived the ruin of the fall. Had this divine image been utterly defaced, then I do not see what element there would have remained in the mind of man upon which the Spirit of God could have worked with His blessed regenerating influence. Man would then have been, like Nebuchadnezzar in his derangement, still in human form, but animated with the heart of a beast.

5. I conceive that this sense of right and wrong may be regarded as part of that nature originally imparted to man, whereby he was fitted to hold communion with God. God called other creatures into existence by His word, and so

made them live; but man He inspired with His own breath, and so gave him a portion of His own divine life. And corresponding to this difference of beginning was the after history. God blessed the living creatures which He had made, pronounced them very good, and bade them increase and multiply; but with man He *held communion*; God “walked in the garden,” you will remember. When Adam heard the voice of God after his sin, it was no strange sound; it is clear that he was accustomed to the voice, though in general it was a voice of joy, not of terror; and from this I conclude, indeed there can be no doubt of the fact, that in the time of his innocence man had special communion with God. I do not pretend to define and explain—the Scripture has not defined, and I do not wish to go beyond the Scripture—but it is evident that there was some marvellous affinity of nature between man and God, when the intercourse of the one with the other could be described as that of God walking in the garden and conversing with man face to face.

6. And, lastly, the possibility of redemption after man had sinned, seems to me to be as great a mark as any of the image of God impressed upon him. When man has fallen you will observe that he is not left to himself, as one whose fall is a trifling matter in the great economy of God's

creation. What was the sin of Adam in the midst of this vast universe? With myriads of exalted creatures doing His will and finding their happiness in His service, of what account could it be to the Most High God whether Adam eat of the forbidden tree or no? Thus we might reason, though it seems we should shew our folly by doing so; for the conduct of our Maker shews that the fall of man was of great account; it was no light matter to give over to the service of Satan a race created in His own image; and therefore He promised a Saviour and undertook the great work of redemption. It was because His own image had been impressed on man, that God undertook to redeem Him; it was because that image, though defaced, had not been wholly destroyed, that such redemption was possible. Yes—thanks to God—we are in some sense in His image still; much as we incline to sin, yet we feel in our hearts and consciences that sin is death and that holiness is life. Much as we swerve from the ways of God, yet our consciences still tell us that those ways are ways of pleasantness and paths of peace; foolishly as we have behaved by seeking happiness in breaking God's commands, yet our hearts testify of our folly, and our better judgment condemns us. Here then are the traces of God's image still, and because these traces remain, therefore there is hope

for us in our fallen condition. God will yet return and build up His Tabernacle which has been thrown down; and it may be that the glory of the latter house will through His infinite mercy be even greater than that of the first.

In these and such like ways, Christian Brethren, I would endeavour to interpret the expression used in the text. With regard to man in his condition of innocence, I should not say that the image of God means this one thing or that, but that it includes all that raised him above the rest of creation, all that made him *human*. The words, "God created man in His own image," form (as it were) the patent of man's nobility, and include therefore all the distinctive marks of his superiority, his upright body, his reflective mind, his conscience, his power of communion with God, his original purity; and, so far as we are concerned who are fallen from our original righteousness, I should say that all traces which remain of these original endowments (and thanks to God there are not a few of them) are marks of God's image abiding upon us still, pledges that we are not forsaken, still the Temple of God, not desolate, though partly ruined and defiled.

What practical lesson shall we learn from such a contemplation as that to which I have led you in this sermon? Is it as matter of curious

speculation that we peruse this ancient document, which tells us that we were created in God's image? Is it not rather one of the most practical of all truths, a truth the holding of which will have as much influence upon our lives as almost any truth we can hold? For surely it is well to recognise our high birth and the greatness of our original destination, in order that we may have a right sense of our dignity as the highest of the creatures of God upon earth. It is not that we may glory in our supremacy; on the other hand the thought of what we *were* and what we *are* ought to fill our hearts with sorrow and shame; but it is well to recognise the mercy and goodness of God, and to see where the fault lies, if the world be (as indeed it is) anything but a garden of the Lord's planting, anything but a Paradise of delights. And though we have nothing to glory in, yet a due consideration of the high condition for which we were created may well tend to raise our hopes and aims, and assist us to walk in the ways of God. Especially to us as Christians is such a view of our condition necessary, necessary in order to make us appreciate the work of Him who came to restore the damaged image of God, to rebuild God's Temple, to raise upon the ruins of primæval innocence a new and glorious creation by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

And so it is, Christian Brethren, that we are saved from unavailing tears over the lost glories of our race. If we have the history of the first Adam to read for our warning, we have also the history of the second Adam to read for our consolation; and we, who have the proof of painful experience that we are very far gone from that condition in which we were created, are able to look with hope and confidence to a time, when all things shall be made new, and when we (through God's grace) shall see Him as He is and be made once more like Him.

SERMON II.

THE SUBTILTY OF THE SERPENT.

(Sexagesima Sunday.)

GENESIS iii. 1.

Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field
which the Lord God had made.

THE first lesson appointed for this morning's service describes the manner in which sin entered into the world and death by sin. And if the entrance of sin and death into the world, and their continuance amongst us still, notwithstanding the advent of the Lord of life and the redemptive work completed by His death and resurrection and ascension,—if *these* be the facts, which beyond all others come near home to every one of us, and compel all but the most thoughtless to think, and force themselves upon the minds of all of us sooner or later, then the chapter which has been read to us may well stand out as one of the principal chapters of the Bible, and the great text upon

which all sermons must be founded. We seem to see in that chapter the explanation, which God has been pleased to grant us, of the riddle of the world. As we walk in our own onward path from the cradle to the grave, we perceive that we are passing through a scene of sin and of death. Other things there are to attract our attention, but these stand out beyond all others; no one can afford to neglect them; they are two of the great bonds of brotherhood, which bind men into one family, and will not permit the richest or the noblest or the wisest to deny that he is of the same blood as the poorest and simplest. Any man who says that he has not sinned is, upon the testimony of S. John, a liar; and any man who says that he will not die, or who practically puts the truth far away from his mind, is (as every one must admit) a fool. Yes, sin and death are amongst us; we cannot get rid of them, however we may triumph over them; and this morning's lesson tells us how they came amongst us, and throws the light which God has been pleased to throw upon the darkness which covers the face of the earth, and so furnishes abundance of matter for the consideration of creatures like you and me, Christian Brethren, who can hardly fail to know that we ourselves have sinned, and who know most surely that we must sooner or later meet death, and that after death comes a judgment.

Nor could you fail to observe, as you heard the chapter read, that the lesson not only told you something concerning the entrance of sin and death into the world, but also told you something concerning Him who should put away sin and overcome death. We heard of a seed of the woman, who should bruise the head of the serpent; we heard of man's shameful fall, and we must have felt as we heard it that it *was* truly shameful; apparently so unnecessary, so unprovoked, so foolish, so full of base ingratitude, so suicidal, so fraught with terrific consequences to generations then unborn; and we might have thought that such a piece of history was enough for one lesson, that after the account of such a fall there would be nothing more to add; and because this might have been our impression, therefore I think it is especially worthy of note, especially indicative of the goodness and mercy of God, especially remarkable as shewing how much higher *His* ways are than our ways and *His* thoughts than our thoughts, that the promise of a Redeemer, and the divine message of comfort and hope, should be delivered in such close connection with the judgment pronounced upon sin and the sentence of expulsion from Paradise. Hence, in taking my text from this morning's lesson, I might very well have called upon you to join with me in admiring

the mercy and goodness of God, which would not permit our first parents to lie helpless and hopeless in the ruin which they had brought upon themselves and their children, but pointed to one of those children as the champion and deliverer of the race, and so preached the Gospel to the world before the gates of the garden which God had planted in Eden were closed to open no more.

But you will perceive, Christian Brethren, that the text which I read to you before beginning this sermon will not lead me into so wide a subject as that of the entrance of sin into the world by the first Adam, or our redemption from the power and consequences of sin by the second. I have taken for my text merely these words, "Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field, which the Lord God had made;" and I propose from these words to draw a conclusion concerning the character of sin, which is not only illustrated by the history of the fall, but is continually illustrated by what we see round about ourselves, and is worthy of consideration because of its practical bearing upon our own lives. I wish you to observe that the serpent, at whose suggestion and under the influence of whose lying words Eve is represented as having broken the command of God, is described, not as *powerful*, though this may have been so, not as *venomous*,

though this may very well be supposed to have been so too, not as *wicked*, though this no doubt it was, but emphatically as *subtle*,—that is, as *cunning, crafty, clever* after a fashion, *prudent* in choosing the means best calculated to attain its own ends, *wise* (according to the phrase used in the New Testament), if it be not a profanation of the sacred name of wisdom to use it in such a case as this. Now that the serpent *was* subtle is I think evident from its conduct; violence would never have done what the serpent by its subtilty effected; a rude attempt on the part of Satan to throw down the partition walls of Eden, which Göd had just set up, would infallibly have come to nought; but the insinuating, flattering, gentle, pitiful speeches of the serpent, addressed with so much skill to a woman's mind, did the devil's work completely: and when we read the manner in which Eve's faith in God was first shaken, and then disobedience gently suggested, and lastly disobedience brought about, and the bond of loyalty broken, we cannot but allow that the most proper description of the serpent is that it *was subtle*; not merely powerful, as I have said; not merely malicious, or spiteful, or wicked, or mischievous, but emphatically *subtle, deceitful, cunning*, and so ten thousandfold more dangerous than the wildest of wild beasts, which shew their nature at once,

and manifestly *are* dangerous, and whose roaring and howling and teeth and claws are abundantly sufficient to put us upon our guard.

Now then I come to the point which I especially desire to impress upon you as one of great practical importance. That serpent which tempted Eve is alive still; it is called in the Book of Revelation "the *old* serpent"; but old as it is, there is no change in its nature; age has had no effect upon it; for all purposes of evil it enjoys, so long as this world lasts, a never-ending youth. And if it was subtle when it made its first assault upon our first parents, it is subtle still. If it then shewed its cunning, and hellish wisdom, and devilish sagacity, by creeping with flattering lying words into our mother's heart, it does so still. If it then contrived to disguise its ugliness, and could point to the beauty of the forbidden fruit without causing disgust at the thought of its beauty being set forth and recommended by such a patron, it succeeds in doing precisely the same thing still. And if by its subtilty the serpent then led mankind into misery, without allowing them to perceive the trap in which they were being caught, it is unquestionably true that it is following up in our own days, and no doubt here as abundantly as elsewhere, that line of crafty conduct, which at the first trial was found to succeed so well.

Do you see what I mean, Christian Brethren? I think you do. What is the serpent in the text, but the embodied form of *sin*? and when I say that the serpent is subtle now as of yore, that it does its work of mischief in the same way, that it succeeds in ruining men and women now in precisely the same way in which it ruined Adam and Eve,—what is all this but telling you, by a parable, that *sin* is the same now as ever, and that the manner in which it crawls into our hearts and our houses, and the manner in which it leads us away from God, although we know for certain that its wages are death, are nothing different now from what they were, when sin made its way into Paradise and brought death and all human woe into the world?

Aye, *sin* is the same now as ever it was; the same in its character; the same in its consequences. And we cannot afford to look upon the story which has come before us this morning, as a tale of the times of old. We cannot afford to look at the serpent, as it makes its quiet way through the garden, and to wonder at its subtilty and to blame Eve for being beguiled by it,—we cannot (I say) afford to do this. The matter comes too near home; and we cannot but feel that God has in His mercy marked once for all the character of sin, in order that *we* may

take warning, and be on our guard against temptations, which we know will be cunningly contrived to suit our weaknesses, and which on this very account are likely to overcome and ruin us.

Now let me, in a plain and simple way, illustrate for you the character of sin which the text brings before us; or, if I may preserve the reference to the serpent, let me shew you two or three ways in which it is proved by experience that the serpent still keeps its subtilty.

In the first place observe, what I think you all must have observed in some degree, namely, the *gradual* character of sin; the manner in which it *grows* by little and little; the manner in which it insinuates itself like a subtle poison into the system, so quietly, so gradually, so imperceptibly, that the man himself is not aware of the progress of the disease, and becomes less open to the conviction of sin the more thoroughly and deeply he is influenced by it. Take a common case. You know some one who is a drunkard; few persons can say that they do not know *one*: how did he become so? undoubtedly by degrees; he did not live for twenty or thirty or forty years in soberness and temperance and godliness, and then suddenly find himself confirmed in habits of drinking. It could not be so. The very name *habit* shews that it could not; a habit is a custom, and a cus-

tom must have time to grow up: there must be first the seed, then the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn. A man would be disgusted with himself, if he found himself suddenly converted into a sot, suddenly deprived of the glory of manhood and changed into a beast; no, the man has *grown* to be what he is, and that so quietly and gradually that he cannot say when he became the degraded creature that he is now. He knows that it was once *light*, he knows that it is now *dark*; but how the twilight crept over him, and when twilight ceased and absolute night began,—this he cannot undertake to say. But is this peculiar to drunkenness? is this the only sin which thus creeps over the man by degrees, and destroys his character by slow stealthy steps? Surely not: how do men become liars? how do they become cheats? how do they become tattlers and busybodies and idlers and mischief-makers? how do they become thieves? nay, how do they become murderers? Is it not that they first indulge in one fault, and then in another, and that each step which they take is so very little in advance of the former, that they do not perceive how constantly, though it may be slowly, they are moving along that broad road which leads to destruction, and along which so many walk?

Take another view of the matter. One might

fancy that there was enough in the character of sin to frighten us away from committing it. If it were really believed to be the baneful thing that it is, one might suppose that men would avoid it, as they would a bottle which was labelled POISON. How is it that men commit sins? how is it that *we*, Christian Brethren, commit sins, so that we are compelled to confess that we leave undone things which ought to be done, and do things which ought to be left undone? One reason is this, that instead of drawing a line between right and wrong, between life and death, between Heaven and Hell, we draw a line between little sins and great ones. I do not say that there is no such distinction; I do not say that an idle word is as bad as murder, or that anger is as bad as slander; but I *do* say that the distinction between great sins and small is for us a very dangerous one, and one which gives great advantage to Satan in his temptations to evil. Such or such an act is admitted, strictly speaking, to be wrong; but then it is so natural an act, committed by so many, so common, so little condemned by people in general, that it scarcely amounts to sin; and it is not perceived that the root of small and great sins is the same, and that he who commits one kind pledges himself to the principle of the other; and that in root and in reality anger is murder, and a wanton

look is adultery. O, if ever there was a little sin, it was that of our mother Eve; eating of a tree which tempted her eye, and which she had been told not to touch; she too so simple and untried, so ignorant of what the result would be, so far from intending to produce the mischief which in reality she did produce. Surely if ever there was a little sin, this was it. This in fact was just the view that the serpent took of it. Herein was his subtilty: he represented it as a small thing; he was too wise to hint at the consequences, which he knew would *not* be small: his cleverness consisted in fixing the mind of Eve upon the present gratification which she would experience, and the smallness of the cost. So is it still with little sins; each one is small, and because it is small it is neglected, and men forget to consider whether God accounts those things small which seem so to us, and indeed whether a sin which produces tremendous results can in any proper and safe sense be accounted small.

Take yet another view of the case, and observe how the subtilty of the serpent is still shewn in this, that men see other persons' faults and sins, and see them so vividly, that they cease to see their own. How seldom it happens that men do really see their sins. Even in the first sin, of which we had the history this morning, you will

remember that Adam did not see his own sin, but he saw that of his wife, and he threw the blame upon her. And when it came to Eve's turn to confess *her* sin, she in like manner sought to lay the blame elsewhere, and said that the serpent beguiled her. Now, if the effect of sin were like that of the disease, by which it is sometimes represented in a parable,—the disease of leprosy, which made a man loathsome to himself, and left no doubt in his mind as to whether he were pure or not,—the danger would not be so great. If it were so, men would fall down in good earnest and make humble confession on their knees. They would cry to Christ as the lepers did in the days of His flesh, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make us clean;" they would say, "there is no health in us," not as the mere repetition of what is printed in the Prayer Book, but as the expression of the deepest and saddest and truest experience of their hearts. They would seek medicine from the Good Physician, and so they would find rest for their souls. But no—it is now as in the days of our Saviour. The mote in our brother's eye is more conspicuous than the beam in our own. We can confess all our neighbours' sins and faults and foibles as readily as may be; and under cover of the supposed sins of our brethren, we forget or cease to see our own. Is

not this the serpent's work? do you not see here the same cunning and subtilty, which has marked the dealings of Satan from the beginning?

But once more. The subtilty of the serpent and the corresponding character of his temptations are seen in this, that sin is often clothed in such a garb of decency and respectability, that it is hardly possible to suspect it to be what it really is. The poor man's drunkenness is shocking; but the rich man's covetousness shocks very few; and going to Church covers a great deal. And in fact it is possible, as we know, to throw a cloke of respectability over many actions, and indeed over whole lives, which in the sight of God are hateful and accursed and abominable. Christ our Lord tore away many such clokes from Pharisees and hypocrites in the days of His flesh; and a merciful thing it is to tear them, and to let light in upon the soul if possible, and to allow it to see how the craft and subtilty of the devil are hurrying it on in blindness towards that awful land of realities, where sins *cannot* be cloked, and where the souls of men and women, whether rich or poor, learned or ignorant, or whatever they be, must stand naked and alone before God.

I might give you other illustrations, but I have said as much as the time will allow. Have you understood what I have said, Christian

Brethren, and have you believed it? In truth it is too plain to be disbelieved, and I must have handled my subject very clumsily if you have not been able to understand my meaning. All that I have desired to impress upon you is this—that the serpent which shewed its cunning and subtilty in Eden is amongst us still; that the allurements of sin are now what they were then; that Satan has not forgotten his craft; and that men and women are carried away from the path of duty and holiness by the same kind of management, which was so successful with Adam and Eve. What is the practical conclusion? surely this, that we must *watch*, as our Saviour bid us all to do,—that we must examine ourselves and see what our lives really are,—that we must endeavour to look through the shams and false appearances of the scene in which we live, and fix our eyes upon the vast reality which the future world will reveal. And who is there that will dare to say he has done all this as he ought? Who is there that has not been led astray by the serpent's subtilty? Who has not cause to confess with shame the imperfection of his obedience, and the sinfulness and selfishness of his life? God only knows the degrees of our sinfulness; but of this I am sure, that the holiest amongst us will be the most ready to confess his iniquity, and the most earnest in

asking help and strength to overcome sin in the Name of that seed of the woman, who was born in the fulness of time to destroy the works of the devil, and who now sits at God's right hand to make intercession for us.

SERMON III.

MAN RETURNING TO DUST.

GENESIS iii. 19.

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

ANY one who has visited the city of Berlin, will almost certainly have visited also the palaces of the kings of Prussia at the neighbouring town of Potsdam. And any one who has done so will probably have had pointed out to him, in the garden of the favourite palace of king Frederic the Great, and not far from the palace, the grave of that king's favourite horse. The grave is notable, not for its own sake, but in consequence of a remark connected with it, which the king is said to have made. It was within a short time of his death, when he perceived his dissolution fast approaching, that he pointed to the grave of his horse and said, "I shall very soon be with *him*." It was a

saying worthy of the school of philosophy to which king Frederic the Great had attached himself.¹ He had given up the faith of Christ, and become a light amongst those who ridiculed Christianity and denied man's spiritual being, and who appeared to think that the words, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die," contained the Gospel which weary men would delight to receive; and so he exchanged all the glorious hopes, which the Christian faith would have given him, for the melancholy thought that he and his horse had one common home awaiting them. It has often struck me as one of the most painful and yet most instructive commentaries upon the character of infidelity, that it should have deprived the mind of one surnamed *the Great*, and in many ways worthy of the title, of all the glorious prospects of life in the presence of God, and given him in exchange nothing but the depressing thought of a grave, which he and the beasts which perish should share together.

On the other hand, it must strike any one, who hears the anecdote which I have just related, that all royal honours in this world, all state and magnificence, all reputation for greatness whether well or ill founded, would be advantageously ex-

¹ The remark of the guide who pointed out the grave to me was, "Il était philosophe."

changed for the simple faith of a cottager who can say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold and not another." Nay it seems quite obvious, that the most superstitious form of religion is infinitely better, infinitely more worthy of being adopted by creatures like ourselves, than a system of unbelief, calling itself by the name of philosophy, which bounds a man's views entirely to this perishing world, and sneers at the notion of a heaven in which we may lay up treasure for eternity.

And yet, if the verse which I have read for a text were the only accredited words of inspiration, if God had never spoken to us any other words besides those which the text contains, might not the dying thoughts of the unbelieving king be defended as containing the true view of human life? The text points, in the most dismal yet decisive manner conceivable, to the dust as that which we all are, and to which we shall all return; it describes our stay upon earth most truly as one of labour, and it does not tell us that the life of labour may issue in a life of rest and peace and joy unspeakable, but only declares that it is to

endure until we return again to the ground; it sums up the description of our being under the title of dust, and declares that as we are dust even in our best estate, so we shall eventually return to the same, and be resolved into our original elements, and become dust more plainly and undeniably, and apparently more hopelessly, than we are during the present life.

Now it is certainly a remarkable thing, that a book like the Bible should contain in one of its earliest chapters such a text as this. If we regard the Scriptures, as we ought, in the character of *one* book, *one* revelation of God's will and purposes, *one* complete spiritual history of the human race, we cannot but contrast the beginning and the end of it, the one savouring so strongly of death, the other of life. And the contrast is so marked, that we cannot but feel that there must be some important teaching contained in it, and that, although we can easily turn to the Gospel and see in it life and immortality brought to light, we shall not be losing our time if we employ it in studying some of God's earlier and darker communications, in which it pleased Him to speak of death rather than life, and of curse rather than blessing.

With this view, therefore, I propose, Christian Brethren, to offer you a few remarks upon the sad and gloomy words which I have read to you for

a text. And the first remark which I will make upon them is this, that although they occur early in the Book of Holy Scripture, they are by no means the first communication made by God to man; far from this; an entire chapter of human history (so to speak) had been accomplished before God addressed to men such words. The words of the text are undeniably the words of a curse, they are spoken in displeasure, they are addressed to the disobedient; but the original condition of man was not one of curse, and the original tone of God's words was one of the most abundant love, and man was created in and for a state of obedience. Hence the actual beginning of the Bible, like the end of it, is conceived in a spirit of gentle loving-kindness towards mankind; the creation of man is emphatically in *God's image*. It is true that he is made of the dust of the ground, but we are informed with great emphasis that God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and so made him a living soul. It is the *difference* between man and other creatures that the history of Genesis brings out; the very point held up for our notice is, that man was *not* created as the beasts that perish; that he had by creation a *life*, a living soul, which they had not; that he was made to be their lord, that the distinction between them and him was infinite. This, as you well know, is the

account which the Scriptures give us of man's creation ; and surely it is a very noble account, one altogether in keeping with the latest and fullest revelations of God made in the Gospel of Jesus Christ ; it is a foundation upon which Christian faith may be substantially built, because it is one, in standing upon which we can venture to believe that wondrous truth, that the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us in order to redeem our race. But when we go beyond the history of this creation, what do we find next ? the history of what our English Bibles describe as man's "shameful fall," his act of disobedience, his breach of the covenant which God had made. It is no part of my intention at this time to discuss the nature of the Fall, but I wish you particularly to observe, that the words of the text *followed* it and are to be taken in connection *with* it ; it was not until man had sinned that God addressed him merely as being dust, and spoke so gloomily of his return thereto. You might have expected that this would have been otherwise ; and there are a great many other things, concerning which we are inclined to think in the same way ; and very often the only answer we can give to questions which may be asked concerning God's dealings is this, that God's ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts than our thoughts. But with regard

to the particular difficulty which we may feel in connection with the text,—or perhaps I should rather say the feeling of surprise that under any circumstances God should have spoken to man concerning death without referring to a life to come, that He should have passed judgment upon sin without hinting at a resurrection of the just and unjust and a judgment according to works,—I would offer you the following suggestion. Did it ever occur to you, that the emphatic manner, in which God speaks in the text of man returning to the dust, is itself a ground, upon which to suspect that that return to dust is not final? God declares to man that law of death, to the truth of which every day bears witness; and He does not please to declare at this time anything more, does not please to reveal the whole truth, does not lighten up the grave with that sure and certain hope of a resurrection to eternal life, which He was pleased to grant afterwards. And we may or may not think this mode of dealing with man strange; but, strange or not, is it at all consistent with the infidel doctrine of the utter perishing of man's being in the grave, to which I alluded in the opening of this sermon? If man's destiny had been merely a brute's destiny, why have laid any *stress* upon his return to dust? If in this respect man and beast were one, why say anything about

the death of man at all? Does not the very mention of the thing, and the mention of it in connection with *sin*, with a moral not a natural disease, suggest to us that that which belongs to brutes by the law of their being does *not* belong to man; that with him death is a curse; that the return to the dust declares his shame; that death is in fact part of the great disease introduced by sin? And when we regard it thus, may we not trust that the disease is one which may be cured? may we not hope that that seed of the woman, of whom we hear as bruising the head of the serpent, may also destroy *this* fruit of the serpent's temptation, and vanquish the grave and restore *life* to the race of mankind?

I am the more anxious to put before you this view of such words as those of the text, because it appears to me to be in accordance with what our blessed Lord once said, when the question of the resurrection of the dead was referred to *Him*. You will remember that the Sadducees brought under our Lord's notice this great question of dispute betwixt themselves and the Pharisees. The Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead, the Sadducees denied it. We must not imagine that the question was one of general doubt amongst the Jews—happily not. The belief of the Pharisees was what we should call the

orthodox faith of the Jewish Church; the belief, or rather unbelief, of the Sadducees was merely the view of a sect, and that not a large sect; and the resurrection of the dead could scarcely be regarded as a matter of question amongst the Jews of our Lord's time more than it is amongst ourselves now. However the Sadducees brought their view of the subject before our Lord, and endeavoured to entangle Him by what they regarded as a weighty objection against the doctrine of a resurrection. Our Lord easily removed the objection; but He did more than this; He rebuked those who made it as "not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God;" and He referred to the words of God spoken to Moses from the burning bush as containing an intimation of the resurrection of the dead. The words were these, "I am the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob;" upon which our Lord made this comment, "God is not the God of the dead but of the living." Now how did these words contain the doctrine? What does our Lord mean by God being not the God of the dead but of the living? I do not suppose that He intended to assert that Moses received the words as declaring to *him* the resurrection of the dead; what they conveyed to him was probably this, that He who was speaking to him was the same God that had called Abraham

and blessed Isaac and chosen Jacob, and that He was willing to continue His mercies to their children though now in captivity. But was this all that the words contained? would it not strike a thoughtful mind, that if Abraham and Isaac and Jacob had been what the Sadducees would have made them, they would have been unworthy of being named in the way in which God named them? would it not in fact suggest itself, that when God designated Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He was speaking not merely of dust which had returned to the dust as it was, but of spirits which had returned to Himself, who gave them, and which continued to live with Him?

As then the words of God to Moses in the bush did in reality contain a doctrine, which nevertheless some seem to have missed; so I think that the words of the text, sad and gloomy as they may seem, and full of the darkness of the grave, may possibly, if viewed aright, exhibit to us at least a faint shadow of immortality. I grant that the mode which God has adopted for the education of our race is very different from what we might have imagined; and it has often been remarked as very strange, that when God took the children of Israel for His own people, and gave them a law and sacrifices and ordinances, there should have been

no view opened of the unseen world; but taking the facts as we find them, and rejoicing that for *us* life and immortality have been brought to light by the Gospel, we may perhaps gain some lessons of value from the very darkness, in which mankind were left by such a sentence as that of the text.

For in the first place nothing can prove more distinctly,—though it may be more painfully,—than the language of the text, the terrible consequences of sin. If it be necessary that a man should know that he is something more than dust, and if we find that as a matter of fact this knowledge has been sadly wanting to mankind, or has been mixed up with fables and fancies, then according to Scripture it is *sin* that has deprived man of that necessary knowledge, and it is Christ the conqueror of sin who has restored it. Scripture does not represent man, as some philosophers would represent him, rising from a state of utter brutishness and barbarism to successively higher states of humanity and knowledge, in virtue of some internal principle; but the Bible pictures to us man as created in the image of God, full of light, coming I should apprehend direct from the source of all light, walking with God, breathing that breath of life which God had breathed into him; and it is only when disobedience has broken the bond which bound him to God, that he is re-

mind of his origin and sentenced to return to the dust. Thus I say that the gloomy character of the text does but declare to us the gloomy character of sin; and if the knowledge of a resurrection was not vouchsafed to mankind, it was because the wages of sin were death, and because Jesus Christ had not yet come to declare eternal life, which is the gift of God through Him.

But again, I think it is worth while to observe, that although it did not please God in the earlier history of mankind to give them those clear intimations of the future life which have been vouchsafed to *us*, He did nevertheless require of them that they should do their duty in that state of life into which it might please Him to call them. And this may teach us not to hang our arguments concerning holiness and godliness too exclusively upon the world to come. Doubtless it is a great privilege to know as much of that world as we do know; doubtless there is corresponding responsibility attached to the knowledge; but it is wrong to allow the greatness of the knowledge to eclipse all considerations grounded upon our relations to God in this present world. "Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return," was apparently all the revelation that Cain had concerning his destiny; and yet when Cain committed murder, God called him to account and judged him severely.

And this may bring to our minds a lesson of the same kind but more general, namely this, that men may have light enough to guide them, and yet may be ignorant of many great truths. I need not say that he amongst us who knows most must nevertheless be ignorant of many things, and must continually become more alive to his own ignorance. But what a disparity of knowledge there is amongst us! how can we all be judged at the same bar, when the advantages of some are so great, and of others so small? We *can* be so judged for this reason, that every one will have to give account of the advantages which he has received, and of those only: the man who has had one talent will not have to give an account of ten; and Cain, though he stands at the head of the list of murderers, will appear far less guilty a sinner than many unrighteous men of our own day, who in the midst of Gospel light have done equally dark deeds: and when this judgment does take place, doubtless many who are first will be last and the last first, and many who, without the law, have done the things contained in the law, will condemn those, who, with God's law to guide them, have gone astray and proved rebellious.

This, however, is a thought that is brought before us continually, and not specially by the text. Yet the thought itself is so important that

it can never be amiss to lay stress upon it; and it may be some help to us, when we look upon the world as it is now, and perceive the gross darkness which covers the face of so much of its surface, to remember for what a long period of history mankind lay under the shadow of that dispensation, of which the language of the text is the keynote. For even then, when men had this as one principal message from God to them, that they were dust, and must return to dust, they still were called to be obedient and dutiful, and to love God with heart and soul and strength. Even then they had a guide to shew them the right way, which, though they might not know it, would bring them to eternal life. But this consideration leads us to another and a brighter one. If the language of the text be dark, and if it be nevertheless the language of God Himself, it leads us to appreciate the wonderful manner in which life and immortality have been brought to light by the Gospel. The language of the text still remains true; every day shews its truth; man goes forth to his labour until the evening; then he rests from his labour in the grave and his body returns to dust; but the return of the body to dust is not that of which we think most, it is the departure of the spirit to be with God. It is only a heathen taste that fills, or rather (I trust I may

say) *used to fill*, our churchyards with urns, emblematical of ashes as the only remains of departed friends. The true Christian taste writes upon the grave, "Here *sleeps* such an one in peace, and in hope of a joyful resurrection through Jesus Christ." Yes, Christian Brethren, the curse of the grave, like all other curses, has been changed to a blessing through the redeeming work of our blessed Lord. He Himself shewed that the words of the text could not be true of *Him*; and the whole human race seemed to receive an emancipation from their power in those words which were spoken over Christ's empty tomb, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?"

Lastly, let us remember that the Lord Jesus Christ repealed the curse of the text, or at all events, neutralized it by a counteracting blessing, not by merely preaching an opposite doctrine, but by Himself submitting to the curse as far as that was possible. Christ was not the mere messenger of a new covenant, but the labourer and the sufferer, by whose labours and sufferings the new covenant was ratified. Death had passed upon all men, because all had sinned, and in a certain sense death passed upon Christ. He truly died. He truly went down into the grave; but truly also He rose again, because His flesh could not turn to dust. And hence the burial of Christ

was the birthday of the human family; an imperishable life was asserted for the whole race, of which Christ is the head. And we still celebrate, and shall continue to celebrate to the end of time, *His death as our life*; and we take as the food, which is to nourish our souls for eternity, His body which was broken, and His blood which was shed. Truly we live in the light. The darkness of the text which oppressed the morning of human history has passed away, and disappeared before the Sun of righteousness. It remains only that we walk as children of light, and labour not only for the bread which perishes, and comport ourselves in all things as they should do, who remember that they must one day hear a voice calling them again from the dust, and summoning them to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.

SERMON IV.

JOSEPH'S BRETHREN STUNG BY CONSCIENCE

GENESIS xlii. 21, 22.

And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them, saying, Spoke I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required.

I suppose that there is hardly any portion of the Bible which so early fixed the attention of most of us as the story of Joseph and his brethren. If a tale had been devised, as so many hundreds of tales are devised, merely for the purpose of amusing the mind and exciting the imagination, nothing could well have been written more adapted to the purpose than this tale. It is so striking in its circumstances, and at the same time there is so much to move the feelings, so much that is what we call pathetic: the character of Joseph so rivets

the fancy, the gentle boy the favourite of his father, and on that very account disliked by his brothers; his hard treatment, his going down to Egypt as a slave, his rapid rise and prosperity, his great virtue and discretion, which lead first to his disgrace and then to his still greater advancement; then the circumstances which bring his brothers down to him, his discovering himself to them, the reconciliation, and lastly the meeting between Joseph and his aged father;—all these features of the story give it a point and interest, which I think most of us must well remember as children, and which do not wear away when we re-examine the history in maturer years.

That which merely amused our childhood may be found to instruct and warn us when childhood has passed away; and I believe that we may find in the history of Joseph many very valuable hints for the practical conduct of life. The life of any man fairly told would undoubtedly contain lessons of the deepest value: be a man never so simple and obscure, if we could only have his spiritual history correctly described, we should have in that history a mine of wealth. We are apt to fancy of many men that they have (so to speak) no separate history; to our minds they present themselves as a crowd, all as like one another as a flight of birds; and yet each one of them has a spirit with which

the Spirit of God strives : each has been led in his own particular way by God's Providence, each has had God's angels watching over him, each has had the tremendous choice to make between the way of life and the way of death : and therefore if we could only know the motives which have actuated each man's mind, if we could only have his experience written plainly and honestly in a book before us ; if we could read God's dealings and trace in all things the effect of His hand, what history could exceed in interest the history of any one human soul ? Now it is because the histories which the Bible contains are, more than ordinary histories, of this spiritual kind, that they are especially profitable for us to read. In the history of Joseph for example we see distinctly the hand of God at work, His providence made visible as one may say, and we can trace in it those springs and causes which in ordinary life are often covered by a mysterious cloud. Let me then take one portion of the story and treat it in accordance with this view : the lesson which it teaches us is very simple, but on that very account more valuable. The part of the story of which I propose to treat, is the conviction of their sin towards Joseph, which was produced in the minds of his brothers, as recorded in the text ; and the lesson which I propose to draw from it is a

general lesson concerning the value of the voice of conscience, and the necessity of attending to its words.

Now you will remember that nothing could be more cruel and unjustifiable than the conduct of his brothers towards Joseph. The father's partiality which gave rise to their jealousy might be, and probably was unreasonable; and the dreams which Joseph dreamed, which seemed to prophesy of his advancement and his greatness, and which in the simplicity of his heart he repeated to his brethren, were likely perhaps to excite in their minds a dislike towards him. But obviously nothing can justify their harsh cruelty: to murder a brother because he is a father's favourite, or because he himself fancies that he is one day to lift up his head high above his kindred, is unworthy of *any* family, and specially unworthy of a family which was brought up as Jacob's probably was. Yet the death of Joseph was planned, and only not executed because the arrival of a company of merchants gave his brothers the opportunity of compassing their end, and gaining some money by the transaction at the same time; so Joseph is sold for a slave, and Jacob is persuaded that his favourite child has been destroyed by wild beasts. Now what I wish you to notice is, that Joseph's brethren in this way committed

a crime which comes to much the same thing as murder, and that they seem to have been quite happy concerning what they had done for some twenty years. They went home to their father, shewed him Joseph's coat stained with blood, told him a lying tale concerning his death, and then went on with their duties as before. They might possibly have some twinges of conscience, but we do not hear of such; and I imagine that any twinges they might have felt at first soon lost their power. The brothers would persuade themselves that there was no great harm in their conduct, that it was a happy thing they had not killed Joseph, *that* might have been wrong; but as it was, he was probably as well off in Egypt as if he had remained in Canaan, and certainly the family was much more happy and the old man much more reasonable without him. At the time when they themselves went down by their father's command to buy corn in Egypt, some twenty years or more after they had sold Joseph, all feeling of guilt had almost certainly passed from their minds; and when questioned by Joseph himself as to their family, they said, "Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and behold the youngest is this day with our father, and one *is not*,"—and *one is not*—that is the easy, comfortable language, in which

twenty years after the deed the brothers speak of the proposed murder, and the actual selling into slavery, of their brother Joseph.

Yet at this very moment, when they spoke so decently of Joseph's memory, their sin was on the point of finding them out; and observe how this happened, for it is very instructive. Joseph desires them to go and bring their youngest brother Benjamin down to him, as a proof of the truth of their words; he pretends to think them spies, come to examine into the state of the country and to report to some distant enemy; he requires them to shew that they are honest men by going home and fetching Benjamin. Observe how this demand affects their minds; you might have expected that they would be grieved, that they would anticipate the difficulties which their father would throw in the way, that they would fear lest they should be unable to clear their characters, and should either perish by the famine or on returning to Egypt be seized as slaves; but you probably would not have expected that the immediate effect of the difficulties in which they were placed would have been to call up before them the memory of their old sin. "They said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would

not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." There was not much apparently to bring the memory of Joseph before them; possibly the fact of the loss of Joseph being the chief reason why Benjamin was kept at home, and why his father would probably object to allow him to come even if they did go to fetch him,—possibly this might have some part in bringing their crime towards Joseph to remembrance. But I apprehend that the chief explanation of their state of mind was this: they had not been placed in any peculiar position of trial since the loss of Joseph; consequently their sin had slept, there had been nothing to call it to light; they had well nigh forgotten it, its heinousness had become dim in the distance. But now they were in trouble, and they could not help seeing the hand of God in that trouble; their spiritual instinct told them that their trouble did not spring out of the ground; it had been planted there; it had a root. What was that root? They could not long be in doubt. Looking back upon their lives, the blackest spot caught their eyes first; the memory of their crime rose from the grave after twenty years' burial; a terrible memory too; a brother's blood crying for vengeance; the first crime which stained the world, and which marked Cain as a vagabond, acted over again, and like it crying from the ground. Their sin in fact

had found them out at last; and their own adversity brought about that contrition for their offense, which its own intrinsic hatefulness ought to have been sufficient to produce.

Observe by the way, how in this condition of things Reuben, who had protested against the cruelty of his brothers, rises up as an accusing spirit: "Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child? and ye would not hear; therefore behold also his blood is required." Reuben probably had not been in the habit of reproaching his brethren for their evil conduct; he had not himself been a party to the plan of selling him to the merchants, and therefore he had a right to accuse them; he *had* saved them from the crime of actual murder, and it was not his fault that any crime was committed at all; but as (for peace' sake apparently) he did not reveal to his father the wickedness of his brothers, so probably he did not keep open the wound by frequently reproaching *them*. Now however the time was come when his lips were to be opened; in the time of prosperity he did not speak, and would probably not have been listened to if he had; *now* the time of adversity is come, his brothers have seen their wickedness themselves, and then he too calls to their remembrance the remonstrances which he himself had made, and which they had despised.

How intensely bitter must have been the reproaches of a brother, uttered at such a time!

Wise people in these days may probably say that Joseph's brethren were superstitious, that the trouble they were in had nothing to do with their sin, that it was the result of circumstances, and so forth. But the question immediately arises, *why* did the remembrance of their cruelty to their brother come before their minds just at this time? Does it strike us when we read the story as anything strange, anything out of keeping, contrary to the natural order and probabilities of the case? Or does it not rather appear to be precisely what we should have expected? Does not our own experience bear witness to us, that if we ourselves had been so situated, a heinous crime such as the murder, or almost murder, of a brother, would have risen up in judgment against us? And when we talk of events being the result of circumstances, does it never occur to us to ask who made the circumstances? The sons of Jacob for instance were brought down to Egypt by a famine, and Joseph was raised by a series of remarkable events, and lastly by this same famine, to be the greatest man in Egypt; but who sent the famine? who contrived all the events which made Joseph what he was? Surely the children of Jacob did but shew their wisdom, when they looked through

all outward circumstances to the maker and orderer of circumstances, even the great God Himself. *He* speaks the word and it is done, *He* commands and it comes to pass; and they were *right*—God *had* called them into judgment, He *had* demanded their brother's blood at their hands, they *were* verily guilty concerning him, and God had brought their sin to remembrance.

And I think we may well take the experience of these sons of Jacob as a light upon much which happens in the present day. If the story of Joseph's brethren were altogether exceptional, altogether removed from common experience, I should say that it was (comparatively speaking) of small value to us; but its value seems to me to consist precisely in this, that it is *not* exceptional; more striking probably in many of its details than any history in which we may have been ourselves concerned, but the same in its general principle and in the moral which may be drawn from it. For what is the moral to be drawn? this,—that men may commit sins and may forget them, and yet the sins may be recorded and may one day rise up again with a frightful vitality. Men will soon bury their own sins, if they be left to themselves; but it is like burying seed, which appears to die and be forgotten, and yet it rises up again and perhaps

becomes a great tree. I do not mean to say that every sin that is committed rises up again in the way in which the sin of Jacob's children rose; some sins lie dormant longer than others, and for aught I know some may lie at rest until the judgment-day; but certainly the general tendency of sin is to rise again; we are led by *circumstances* to take different views from those which once we took, and then sins formerly committed pierce our consciences and demand repentance. The history of great crimes often illustrates this; but even in ordinary experience I think we often find that the conscience is somehow awakened to old transgressions, and that sins which did not shock us much at the time seem in after days enough to overwhelm us with shame. And if they *do* overwhelm us with shame, if they *do* lead to repentance, if our sorrow be of a godly sort, and if repentance produce amendment, and amendment be the foundation of a holy, godly, Christian life, it is well; then God's gracious purpose is answered; and though He may have led us by a way which we knew not, still we shall perceive in the end that it was the right way. But the mischief is that very possibly sins may rise up again at a time, when repentance is difficult and reparation impossible. Repentance will not admit of our choosing our own time, and it is very possible

that a man may be brought to feel that he is "verily guilty" at a season when he cannot but also feel that the proper time for fruits of repentance is gone by. Your minds will at once carry you to the thought of a repentance put off till the close of life; a man spends his life in careless ways, not particularly bad, but careless, and therefore to a considerable degree godless; and at length he is compelled by circumstances (I do not care what they may be) to reflect upon his condition, and to think of the change which will shortly come upon him; and then rise up from the ground (so to speak) the ghosts of forgotten sins; sins deemed to have been long dead and buried rise from their graves; and conscience, acting the part of Reuben in our history, adds its reproach, "Spake I not to you and you would not hear?" A fearful thing to picture to oneself, Christian Brethren, is a human soul thus tormented. But you will say, people are *not* so tormented. No, very frequently not; and then I think that the case is worse. Whatever may be the value of late repentance, it is better to repent late than not at all. If the disease be there, it had better come out (as we say). Nothing can be more lamentable than a careless life and an equally careless death; as sure as there is a God in Heaven, who judges between good and evil, this can *not* be well; no,

Christian Brethren, fearful as may be the discovery which men make of their sins, when the proper time for repentance and amendment is past, there is one thing still more fearful, and that is to have lived a life of ungodliness, and never to have discovered our wretchedness at all.

But why do I speak of this subject? Because I wish to press upon you that the accusing voice of conscience is a good voice, a wholesome voice, yea, the very voice of God to our souls, and one to be welcomed by us *if only we listen to it at the right time*. “We are verily guilty concerning our brother,” was a true confession, and one pregnant with reformation and amendment; but Joseph’s brethren ought not to have waited until they had been put in Joseph’s prison, and treated harshly, and threatened with rougher treatment still, before they made the discovery. They ought to have found this out long before, and every day they ought to have bewailed their fault and sought to repair it; they had been verily guilty, as guilty as human souls could be, for twenty years; the crime was not new; the only new thing was the consciousness of guilt. And I say that this consciousness of guilt is a blessed thing, if only it come at the right time and when there is opportunity for bringing forth fruits meet for repentance. Christian Brethren, which of us is there who has not com-

mitted such offenses as to make it right for us to say we are *verily guilty*—guilty concerning our *brother*, it may be—guilty of unkindness and want of charity, and bad example and neglect, and of putting stumbling-blocks in our brother's way; and if not this, at least guilty concerning our God and ourselves; guilty of misspent time and wasted advantages, and coldness of heart and want of faith. Some of us may be more guilty than others; but I am not now concerned with relative merits and relative guilt; I only lay stress upon the fact of universal guilt, in order to impress the necessity of universal consciousness of guilt, and universal contrition and amendment. With us, as with the sons of Joseph, there is not one of the family who is pure from sin; not one of us can cast a stone at another and say, I thank God I am not like you. The great point however is not merely to acquiesce in such a confession as this, but to sorrow for our sin with true godly sorrow; the great thing to be avoided is to leave our sins unthought of and uncared for, until they arise before us and frighten us from our propriety, when they can *only* frighten us and when repentance is out of our power. Far, far be it from me to say when that time may be; far be it from me to say under *what* circumstances sorrow may work death, and under *what* it may work repentance not to be

repented of; but at least we may be sure that when men and women are called upon, as we by God's mercy are still called upon, to bring our lives to remembrance and turn to our Father for pardon for the past, and grace for the future, it cannot be yet too late. Here we are on safe ground; the future may never be; the present alone can be called our own; but the present we have. God calls to us and says, you are verily guilty; the Scripture says, you are verily guilty; the Church says the same thing; it only remains for us to take up the accusation into our own mouths, and say, "Yes, indeed we are." Each man can alone know, or at least only he and God can know, how true the charge is, how many counts the indictment contains, of how many faults which the world little suspects his own conscience accuses him, and for which, unless repented and forsaken, God will judge him; only he and God can know this. Well is it for us if we do know it; well is it for us if our own estimate of our condition is the same, at least in its main features, as that estimate, which God has made, and which the last day will produce.

SERMON V.

JOSEPH SENT INTO EGYPT BY GOD.

GENESIS xlv. 5—8.

Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God.

THE language of these verses contrasts somewhat strangely with that which Joseph's brethren used concerning themselves. When they were brought to confess their guilt, they said, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother." They had come into trouble, and they did not see their way out of it; they thought they were going to be made slaves; they remembered their old father at home, and considered how helpless he would be if he should lose them, and how sad he would be

when they went back to him without Simeon. And when they were in this strait, that happened to them, which so often does happen under similar circumstances: the remembrance of an old sin rose up before them: their brother, whom they had treated so shamefully twenty years before, seemed to rise up from his grave and take vengeance upon them; and they could not refrain from connecting the trouble, in which they now found themselves, with their old sin committed so many years ago.

Superstition you may call this, if you please, but anyhow there was a great deal of truth involved in it; indeed it is always better to be superstitious in this sense than faithless,—better to see links connecting our sins and our sorrows, which may sometimes perchance be imaginary, than to live on the wretched infidel principle that there is no connection whatever, and to say of all our sins, “Tush, Thou God carest not for them.” Anyhow in this case the children of Israel were right: there *was* a nearer connection between their cruelty to Joseph and their present affliction than they could possibly have guessed; for it was not merely their sin which had risen up against them to scourge them, but it was Joseph himself, whom they fancied to be dead, who was the actual punisher of their sin.

Hence the consciences of these men told them

a great truth, when they were taught by their misfortunes to say, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother." It was a great truth to them, though not a new truth; indeed it was the most simple and obvious of truths. But men very often do not see concerning themselves what is quite obvious to every one else; men are sometimes in the eyes of their brethren obviously dishonest, or covetous, or unreasonable, or bad tempered, or proud, or sensual, or niggardly, or what not; but, they do not see it themselves, they hold an entirely different opinion; and it is only when by God's grace they have been inwardly convinced of sin that they open their eyes, and say, "We are verily guilty;" and the truth, which every one else saw before, flashes in upon their souls and seems to them the most portentous of truths, and perhaps changes the whole current of their thoughts and lives.

I think therefore we must by no means take away from the fulness of the truth which was involved in the confession, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother." And allowing these words to maintain their force, we cannot but perceive, as I remarked in opening this sermon, that the words of Joseph in the text contrast somewhat strangely with those other words spoken by his brethren. *They* said, "We are verily guilty concerning our

brother;" *he* said, "Be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither," and again, "So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God." What are we to say to this contrast? Of course we may say this, that we see in Joseph's words a fine instance of his kindness and courtesy to his brethren; he wished to put them at their ease with regard to him; he longed for their affection and for the reunion of the whole family, and he knew that there could be no real comfort and love amongst them as long as any of them thought that Joseph retained in his breast the remembrance of their unkindness. It is clear that the view which he took of their conduct was the one most likely to give them ease. He shewed them his greatness, pointed to the magnificent results which had flowed from his being sent down to Egypt, and encouraged them to think rather of these results than of the malice which led them to banish him from his home. He assured them that after all they were but instruments in *God's* hands, that *God* had sent him, that *God's* providence was at work for good when they sold him as a slave.

We can hardly be surprised, then, to find Joseph adopting the language he did, supposing him to be able to adopt it conscientiously; and what I wish you to perceive is, not only that he

could adopt it conscientiously, but that in so speaking he uttered a very great truth, quite as great a truth as his brethren had uttered when they said that they were verily guilty. It is not merely Joseph's courtesy and kindness and forgiving spirit which you should admire, however admirable these may be. I wish you to perceive, that although the view taken by him appears so different from that taken by his brethren, both views are true, and both important. They had done what they did as wickedly and maliciously as possible; nevertheless it was true that it was not they, but God, who had sent Joseph into Egypt.

On the whole, therefore, we are brought to consider the manner in which God governs this world. That He does govern it, we do not—we dare not—doubt; but it is equally true that He governs in a way which we should not have expected, and that much of His handiwork appears strange; so strange indeed, that we know that it has been in all times and is in our time easy to say, God cares not, God sees not, or even to adopt the bolder language of the fool and say, "There is no God." I need hardly remark, that to any one who gives himself the trouble of thinking, this result is not surprising. Any thoughtful man would say, It is impossible for me to find out how the world *ought* to be governed; it would be pre-

sumptuous for me to say what God *ought* to do; and any plan which might suggest itself to my mind would be shewn, by the very fact of its being so easily thought out by a mere mortal like myself, to be most probably not the way which God would choose. In this way God teaches us humility, and encourages us to look forward to a higher condition of being, in which the discords of this world shall be resolved into harmonies, its contradictions reconciled, and its difficulties made clear by the light of God shining into eyes purged from the films of this mortal life. Meanwhile, God would have us to study the ways of His providence, and learn lessons of practical wisdom for the guidance of our own feet.

Let me, therefore, by way of illustration, give you an instance or two from Scripture of the same kind of contradiction as that which I have noticed as being brought before us by the text. Take as a first example the case of Esau and Jacob. Here we have a manifest instance of unjust dealing. No one can justify Jacob's conduct; it was unbrotherly, and it was false; and the fact of his eminence in Old Testament history ought not to make us think lightly of his fraudulent behaviour, but quite the contrary. Nevertheless the blessing of Isaac held good, though fraudulently obtained; and the purpose of God, that "the elder should

serve the younger," *was* carried out. I do not say that this purpose would not have been carried out, if Jacob and Rebecca had been honest; doubtless it would; I only wish you to perceive that as a matter of fact this conduct, with respect to which Jacob must have confessed, if he considered the matter, "I am verily guilty concerning my brother," did form part and parcel of the history, through which the purpose of God according to election, not of works, but of Him that calleth, was (in the language of the Apostle) "made to stand."

Again, remember how the hardheartedness and folly of Pharaoh were made to contribute to the carrying out of God's designs concerning the Israelites. The Pharaoh, who oppressed the people of God, was not less an instrument in God's hand than the other Pharaoh, who received them with kindness and gave them the land of Goshen wherein to dwell. So much is this the case, that when Pharaoh's obstinacy and pride time after time prevented him from letting the people go, we read that "*God* hardened his heart;" and still more emphatically we find God represented as saying to Pharaoh, "For this very cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee My power."

Again, you may call to mind how the rebellion of the Israelites led to their having a king. They were verily guilty in this matter; it was want of

faith, want of submissiveness, an unholy desire to be like the heathen nations round about, that led them to cry out for a revolution and to insist upon Samuel giving them a king. And yet how much of the history of the people hangs upon their having a king! Nay, if they had had no king, how should He have been revealed who was the Son of David, the King of the Jews, and more than that, the King of the whole human race? How could Jesus Christ our Lord have preached, "*The kingdom of heaven is at hand,*" unless the Jews had first been taught in their own history what a king was, and had learned to associate all thoughts of glory and peace and wealth with the memory of their own great king? *They* were verily guilty; and yet somehow it was God who was working all the while, and it was not they who made David king, but God.

But let us pass from the Old Testament to the New; and in the New I will give you only one example, because there is one which so entirely transcends all others, and exhibits the truth of which I am speaking in so striking and so awful a manner, as to render us blind (as it were) to all inferior examples. I allude to the circumstances of our blessed Lord's sorrowful life on earth, and especially the circumstances connected with His shameful and yet life-giving death. The

history of our Lord suggests itself the more readily to our minds, because in so many respects Joseph was a type of Him,—a type of Him in his humiliation, a type of Him in his subsequent exaltation, betrayed by his brethren to death, and yet through the gate of death rising to a throne, and enabled to give life and happiness and peace to those who had been his persecutors. Well then, look for a moment at the circumstances of our Lord's history: surely if ever there were men, who had cause to say "we are verily guilty concerning our brother," those men had cause to say so who persecuted Christ. Christ went about doing good, teaching, healing, blessing, and He received in return neglect and scorn and malice. Yet if this had not been so, how could ancient prophecy have been fulfilled? how could Jesus have been the man of sorrows? and, which is still more important, how could He have illustrated in His life the true nobility of character which belongs to him who, when reviled, reviles not again, and turns the left cheek to those who smite him on the right? How could He have set up a new standard in the world, and taught men to see (as I believe most of us now *do* see) that the truly divine and heroic character is that of the lowly and gentle and meek? And if the Lord Jesus did thus turn to account the hardness of

heart and ingratitude of His countrymen, and if through their cruelty to Him the whole world has been taught what kind of character and conduct to love and revere, is it not true that somehow the hand of God *was* at work after all, and that the persecutors of Christ were as much the instruments of God's providence as the persecutors of Joseph?

Take a more particular case. Single out from among the persecutors of Christ the most cruel and shameful of all: you cannot for a moment doubt who it was: the treacherous *friend*, the faithless *disciple*, the man who took advantage of his knowledge of His Master's habits to sell Him at the price of a slave,—*he* stands out far above all others as the man most guilty concerning Christ. And indeed he felt his guilt as you know; it was the condemnation of Christ which brought him to his senses, and he said, "I am verily guilty concerning my brother," and so he went and hanged himself. Yet was Judas thwarting God's designs, or was he carrying them out? Was it not true, even in this case of tremendous, most damnable, most hateful guilt, that God was at work the while, and that the treachery of Judas was the means of the redemption of the world? You may be disposed to ask, if Judas had been faithful (as doubtless he might have been if he would), what

would have been the result, what would have occupied the place which is now occupied by the Cross of Christ? I cannot answer such questions; the true wisdom is to say at once, I do not know. I know what God *has* done, I do *not* know what He would have done, had things been other than they are. I can see that the wickedness of Judas has been overruled for good; if he had been faithful, I doubt not that the purposes of God would have been accomplished, but *how* I know not.

These instances from Holy Scripture may suffice, Christian Brethren, to illustrate the truth which we have under consideration at this time. Have I taken them from Scripture, because there are none to be found out of Scripture? Surely not: history is full of them, our own lives are full of them. I say history is full of them, and I could easily give you abundance of examples, but I will give you only one. Look at that great event in the history of the Church of England, which we call the Reformation: we all (I am sure) believe that it *was* a *reformation*, that it was a bringing back of our Church to something more like the Apostolical model, that it was a purifying of the Church from much evil, and that it has been a permanent blessing to this country and to the world: but when we look at the chief actor in it, and find,

instead of a saint zealous for the glory of God, a lustful, unprincipled king, thinking much more of the manner in which he might indulge his passions than of the honour of God, we stand aghast at the thought of such a reformer of the Church of Christ.* Those who wish to injure the Church of England have not been slow to seize hold upon this point; they have endeavoured to identify the Reformation with the king under whose authority it took place, they have tried to make his wickedness stand for a sample of the Reformation as a whole. Well, Christian Brethren, they who wish to have their sneer at us must have it; we cannot deny the want of holiness which characterised Henry VIII.; we do not desire to adopt any dishonest pretences concerning him or concerning any others; but this we *may* do; we may say, God has often used much worse instruments, and though the instruments themselves be guilty, yet God may be at work the while, and may be bringing about His designs. I cannot tell you why God caused the light of His Gospel to burst forth in the reign of a wicked king; but I see that He has often acted in like manner; and

* I am, of course, not ignorant of the chivalrous attempt lately made by Mr. Froude to give an entirely new view of the character of king Henry; but I think few are quite convinced, though all will regard Mr. Froude's work as a valuable contribution to the history of Henry and his times.

I learn to overlook the instruments of His providence, in contemplation of the mighty deeds which He brings about with His own right hand and with His holy arm.

But let us come nearer home. Let us look into that history which lies close at our doors, the history of our own lives, the experience of our journey through this world hitherto. Every man's history is different from that of his brother; as all human faces have the same general features and so in a certain sense are all alike, and yet no two of the millions upon earth are identical or can be mistaken for each other by those who have studied them, so is it with the lives of men; they are all alike and yet all different, the same general features but with infinite diversity of detail. Hence it is in vain to attempt to draw a picture of a human life which shall suit all men; yet I shall be much surprised if there be any one, who, on looking back upon his life, cannot find passages in it, illustrating the subject which we have been discussing,—who cannot call to mind cases, in which God's providence has brought about results in the strangest way, educing good from evil, turning that which seemed to be ruin into blessing, making even the sins and follies of men to declare His glory and to forward the spiritual interests of their brethren. What we see with

our outward eyes in this world are human agents, apparently following their own tastes and working their own plans; we see human causes producing effects; we see little circumstances, sometimes accidental as we call them, giving birth to mighty changes which affect millions of our race. But is there nothing more to be seen by eyes more keenly sighted than ours? Do angels see nothing more? Does God see nothing more? Nay, may not even we see more, if only we look from that point of view which God has given us by the teaching of His Holy Word? May we not see His hand everywhere? all things living and moving in Him? no sparrow falling without His leave, no hair of one of His saints perishing?

I believe, Christian Brethren, that it is our privilege as sons of God, lightened by that light which came into the world to be the light of men, taught in God's own school,—it is our privilege, I say, thus to see the world in which we are; and it is our duty so to regard it. It is not merely that we are clearer-sighted than those who do not recognise God's hand; the question assumes a thoroughly practical form, when we consider, *if* things be thus, what manner of persons ought *we* to be in all holy conversation and godliness? *if* God be the great mover of all things in this world, and the events great and small which we witness

be His doing, how can we walk otherwise than soberly, seriously, solemnly, if not sadly, in His sight? Ask yourselves, Christian Brethren, what your state of mind upon this matter really is. How do you look upon the world? Is it in your eyes God's world? Do you see His hand in all things, do you in fact believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and do you act up to your faith? Believe me, it is not well with you if you have any other theory of the world and its order: or rather, there can be no other order than this; all else must be *disorder*, and must end in acknowledging the Devil as the lord of the world. All other views will be unsatisfying to the human soul, and will be found wanting: but he who believes in God will stand upon a rock, and will be able to retain his faith unshaken and his hope firm, when the fashion of this world has all passed away.

SERMON VI.

THE PASSAGE OF THE JORDAN.

(Fifth Sunday after Easter.)

DEUTERONOMY ix. 6.

Understand therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiff-necked people.

THE first proper lessons for several Sundays have been taken from the Book of Deuteronomy. If my attention had not been drawn in other directions, I should probably have looked into the chapters which have been read, for the texts of some of my sermons; and I should have had no difficulty in finding many, which would have suggested to us valuable thoughts. However other subjects have offered themselves; but I am unwilling to allow our readings of Deuteronomy all to pass by, without for once at least directing your attention in the sermon to what you have heard in the lesson: and therefore to-day I have taken for my text

some of the words of Moses, which (as you heard in the lesson) he spoke to the Israelites before the passing of the Jordan. It was one of the critical points of the journeying of the Israelites to the promised land; and therefore we may perhaps attach an extraordinary degree of interest to anything which Moses might say to them.

Just consider what their position was. Forty years ago they had left their house of bondage in Egypt: in that forty years they had had some very wonderful experience: they had come out of Egypt in the condition in which you would imagine that a nation or rather a multitude of slaves *would* come out of the house of bondage; their spirits were broken, their tastes low and sensual, their ignorance great, and their waywardness and obstinacy great in proportion. Under the guidance of Moses they were not only delivered from their enemies, but they went through a very wonderful education; it was a divine education, God Himself took their education in hand; God gave them a law, invited them to worship, renewed His covenant with them, and *so* governed them in order that He might lift them up for ever. The education however, as you know, failed: failed, that is, so far as *they* were concerned who came out of Egypt; it seemed impossible even for a divine discipline to make those slaves free.

to change their slavish hearts into the hearts of servants of God; and so they all perished in the wilderness, and their children took their places and inherited their promises. Now after forty years' wandering they come to the boundary of the promised land; the end is in sight, only the Jordan runs between their home and them; and the interest of the chapter which has been read to us consists chiefly in this, that it tells us what kind of exhortation Moses thought it well to give to the people at this critical moment. What kind of exhortation was he *likely* to give? If he had followed the example of most captains of armies under similar circumstances, I think that he would have laid much stress upon the hardy habits which the people had acquired by their long wanderings; he would have praised their courage, compared them favourably with their fathers, assured them that the power of their enemies had been overrated, that if they were true to themselves they were sure to win the victory. And probably there is much human wisdom in this kind of dealing with an army, on the eve of an engagement; but you are to notice, that the address of Moses is as different as can well be conceived. There are several points in the address which will shew you that this is so, and to these I will call your attention.

In the first place you must observe, that there is no attempt made by Moses to underrate the power of the enemies, with whom the Israelites had to contend. He begins his address by telling the people that they are that day to pass over Jordan, to go in and possess nations greater and mightier than themselves. The thing seems an impossibility upon the face of it: if the nations on the other side of the river were, as Moses said, greater and mightier than Israel, the wisest thing possible would seem to be to keep the river as a line of defense; a weaker army may protect itself against a stronger by availing itself of the help of a river, but to cross the river seems madness; nevertheless upon this point there is no hesitation; "Thou *art* to pass over Jordan this day," says Moses; there is to be no question about crossing, and no delay in doing it. And when Israel are on the other side, what are they to expect to find? Men of gigantic stature, and cities fenced up to heaven; or (as we should say) a powerful race of inhabitants, protected by hill-forts, and having all the advantage of knowing the country. All this, you will observe, was laid before the people candidly and honestly: the leader of an army frequently has information concerning the enemy which he thinks it not wise to publish, he is afraid of discouraging his men,

he tells *them* everything that he thinks will keep up their spirits, he locks up in his own breast anything which he thinks will have the contrary effect; and this information concerning the power of the Canaanites is just the kind of information, which one might have fancied that Moses would conceal. Therefore it is notable that he did *not* conceal it. And if you ask why, it is not sufficient to answer, that Moses being a righteous man would tell the truth, for he might very easily have adhered to truth and yet not have given so fearful an account of the enemy's power. It is a better answer to say, that the design of Moses, or rather of Him who employed Moses, was not merely to conquer the Canaanites, but to educate the people of Israel; not merely to make Israel victorious, but to make them understand how it was that they were victorious; not to make them fancy that if they exerted themselves they could do anything they pleased, but to teach them that by God's power weakness may be made strength and the mighty vanquished by the feeble.

That this was so you will see clearly, if you observe the conclusion, which Moses draws from what he says concerning the greatness of the children of Anak. What would be the natural conclusion from such premisses? Perhaps something of this kind. These people are very strong, *there-*

fore you must not be surprised if you find that after all you cannot get the better of them. You must not be too sanguine as to the result; you must be ready for retreat, prudence requires it. This, I say, might perhaps be the natural conclusion; but you will perceive that nothing can possibly be more different than that which Moses draws. "Understand therefore," he says, "that the Lord thy God is He which goeth over before thee." There is no intention of suggesting a thought of cowardice, but only of bringing out in bright colours what is the true source of strength. The enemy is strong, *therefore* understand that the Lord your God goes before you; the enemy is strong, *therefore* remember that you do not depend upon your own strength, but upon that of the great God who made heaven and earth; it is His will that you should overcome these mighty enemies, *therefore* you may be quite sure that they will not be able to stand before you. And because this is so, therefore you will observe that the deeds of God and the deeds of His people Israel are identified in a way which is very remarkable. If you look at the third verse, you will understand what I mean. Speaking of God, Moses says, "*He* shall destroy them, and *He* shall bring them down before thy face," and then immediately afterwards, "so shalt *thou* drive them out, and destroy them

quickly." The destruction is spoken of, you will perceive, indifferently as the act of the people or as the act of God; it would be done by the hand of the people so far as visible agency was concerned, but it would be after all the work of the invisible hand of God.

And thus was brought into prominence the great truth, that the Israelites, like all other men, could do great acts only by the power of God strengthening them. This was to be the foundation of their spiritual life, as it must be the foundation of our own; it was thus that they were to become a holy nation, a peculiar people. Moses never desired to produce merely a body of well-drilled soldiers; he did not desire that when the Israelites were once settled in Canaan they should be a band of freebooters, and a terror to surrounding nations; he desired that as soon as the work of conquering the land was finished, they should be men of peace. He told them that the country was *their* country, that God had given it to them; that they were to take possession of it, and when they had taken possession of it to till it and worship God in it. Therefore Moses will not allow the centre of their thoughts to be themselves, and their own courage and their own righteousness; but rather God the Lord of heaven and earth, under whose guidance they were ever to believe

themselves to be. And this is made still more striking by the manner in which Moses assures the people in plain language, that no righteousness of their own had gained them the land. They might be ready enough to admit that it was not their own courage, or their own bodily strength, but they might still be disposed to think that they had deserved God's favour; they might own that it was God's hand that had given them the victory, but they might flatter themselves that if they had not been deserving of it, God would not have given it to them. Who does not know how easy this self-flattery is, and how possible it is for persons to talk a great deal about God's grace, and their own weakness without Him, and yet to have all the while a lurking feeling of self-satisfaction, a persuasion that it is something in them which has merited God's approbation? The Israelites were quite as likely to be led astray in this manner as any of us can be, and therefore Moses very wisely and very decidedly protested once for all against such a view of God's doings; "not for thy righteousness," he says, "nor for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land." What a remarkable lesson of humility! what plain honest speaking! how very different from the language which men usually adopt when they address a crowd of people whom they wish to

influence, and whose good opinion they desire to win! If Moses had learned his art from most popular orators, he would, I suppose, have told the people how free and enlightened they were; what a noble battle they had fought for the sacred cause of liberty; how they had hurled down the proud tyrant Pharaoh from his throne to the dust, and how, if they trod in the same path in which they had hitherto walked, they would very soon have new triumphs to record. How easy it would have been to have made a speech of this kind! And I suppose that the temptation to make it was as great for Moses, as for men who do the like in our own day; but Moses had higher views with regard to the people, and higher principles on which to act. He wished them to know the truth, in order that the truth might set them free; and therefore he told them plainly that they had no merits of their own to plead, they had been ever rebellious, ever stiff-necked, ever hard-hearted: and the reason why God intended to give them the victory, was because God had a great purpose to carry out, and a covenant to perform which He had made to their fathers.

This, then, was the spirit of Moses' address to the Israelites before the passage of the Jordan, and it is all summed up in the words of the text which I have taken for this sermon. "Under-

stand therefore," says Moses,—let this be the basis of all your thoughts concerning God and yourselves,—“that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiff-necked people.” And I may observe, that these words contained the spirit not only of Moses’ address before the passing of the Jordan, but of all his addresses and of all God’s dealings with the people of Israel; the very thing which distinguishes the history of Israel from that of all other nations is, that *this* is the spirit of it. If it were part of my present purpose, I might offer you some thoughts upon this point. I might ask you to consider the evidence which we have in this fact for the truth of the history; for is it not strange, that a nation should hold so sacred, and cling with such tenacity to, the records of their race, and that those records should be such as this? You expect to find that the account which a people give of themselves is one of which they may be proud, a descent from heroes, a history of glorious battles, and ancestral prowess; and certainly you do *not* expect to find a continual lecture concerning stiff-neckedness, a continual testimony that the nation had no strength of its own, no courage of its own, no righteousness of its own; but that all which it possessed and all which it was able to do, came

from the free love of God, who had made a covenant with Abraham. And if any one should say, "O yes, but it was the priests who were so careful of these records; and they were so, because they were able by means of them to keep the people in bondage,"—then it may be worth while to reply, that no class are more hardly dealt with in many of the sacred books, than this same class of priests. No, it is impossible to deny the fact, that the Israelitish people ever have held, and still do hold with admirable faithfulness, to those sacred books, which declare that all greatness which the people may ever have had, was due to no merit of their own, and which enable us to understand better than anything else why that people are debased and scattered now.

But this kind of discussion would take me too far from the more simple and practical application of the subject which I desire to give. I wish to regard God's dealings, of which I have been speaking, as a foreshadowing of the Gospel; and I think that we may very easily catch up from the words of Moses, spoken so long ago, sounds which ought not to die away, but to be heard by human ears as long as the world lasts. For indeed, Christian Brethren, is not the principle of spiritual life with ourselves precisely that, which Moses laid down as the principle of national life for the Israelites? Is

not the thing, which we have to understand beyond all other things, precisely that, which in the text the Israelites are commanded to understand, namely, that God gives us the land of promise not for any righteousness of our own? It is no mere fancy, no mere play upon words or play upon facts, to connect what Moses said to the Israelites with what God says to us: because if God be ever the same, then He says the same thing in our time as He said three thousand years before; and however different the external circumstances may be, we should expect that the method of His dealings would be precisely the same with His chosen people Israel as with His chosen people in our own days. Aye, His *chosen* people: the Israelites were bid to take their stand upon God's covenant, and upon no other ground; and so we teach our children that God has made them His own children, members of Christ, and heirs of His kingdom. We do not ask a child, whether it has done much that is good or much that is bad; we do not ask it whether it thinks it can contend successfully with its enemies; but we tell it upon the faith of God's word that it can conquer in God's strength; we tell it that it has been redeemed by the Son as certainly as it has been created by the Father, and that equally certainly it may be sanctified by the Holy Ghost. Everything you perceive is made to

depend upon God's mercy, God's will, God's purpose: no doubt is expressed about the result of the conflict with sin: the certainty of victory depends, not upon any feelings or experience or confidence of the child, but upon the ever-present help of the Almighty God.

Then likewise we may see in the plainness with which Moses spoke of the strength of the Anakim, a type of that plainness of speech with which we should ever speak of our spiritual enemies. O Christian Brethren, they are powerful indeed! those lusts of the flesh, lusts of the eye, pride of life, of which S. John spoke, and of which all Christian teachers have spoken in one form or another—are they *not* strong? Do they not for instance fill young people's heads with vanity and self-conceit and love of finery, and make them lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, and persuade them to lay up all their treasure here and none in the world to come? Why is this? because people do not realise the very truth which the Israelites were compelled to realise, namely, that these things are enemies. The Israelites knew very well that so soon as ever they were across the Jordan, there was but one thing to be done; they must slay or be slain; if they did not uproot their enemies, they would infallibly be destroyed themselves. And this, I say, is what Christians seem

not to realise ; they think to live on good terms with bad habits and bad passions ; to divide the land with them, to do in fact what Christ said was impossible, namely, serve God and the world at the same time. Depend upon it, Christian Brethren, this is impossible ; and when once a man has thoroughly understood that it is a case of life and death, that he must either slay or be slain, then, I think, and not till then, he will be likely to rouse himself to conquer sin and to cast out of his heart all thoughts and desires which are hateful to God, and destructive to his own soul.

Lastly, Christian Brethren, there is a way in which the history of the Israelites is often taken as symbolising our own spiritual history, and which one can hardly pass over, but in which the resemblance fails in a remarkable degree. The Jordan is often the river of death, the land of Canaan is the promised heaven beyond. The figure is one with which we meet continually, but there is a remarkable failure in its application, namely, that with Israel the enemies were all on the other side of the Jordan, in our case we leave all enemies on this : we can cross the river, but they cannot. Christ has made a way for His ransomed to pass over, and sin and death and all the enemies of our souls are left in the wilderness on this side. It is a blessed difference, Christian Brethren, between the

type and antitype: when the messenger of God says to our souls, "Ye are to pass over Jordan this day," there will be no addition concerning enemies great and tall, who must be subdued before we can be at peace: fighting will be over, when once the deep cold stream is passed. Yet the great principle declared in the text will still be true: if by God's grace we reach the other shore safely, we shall have no right, as we shall have no desire, to celebrate our own strength and courage; we shall feel more deeply than we possibly can now, that God giveth us not that good land for our own righteousness, and we shall say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name be the praise!"

SERMON VII.

THE WARS OF THE LORD.

(First Sunday after Trinity.)

JOSHUA x. 40—42.

So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel commanded. And Joshua smote them from Kadesh-barnea even unto Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even unto Gideon. And all these kings and their land did Joshua take at one time, because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel.

THESE verses may be regarded in the light of a sample of the chapter, which has been read from the Book of Joshua this morning. I wish them to be so regarded; what I shall have to say will not bear upon these verses more than upon many others, but I wish to bring under your notice the general character of the lesson, and to offer you some thoughts concerning its character. “Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south,

and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God commanded"—this and the rest of the text may, I say, be taken as a sample of the chapter, and in like manner the whole chapter may be taken as a sample of the book of which it is a part; it is the book of the wars of the Lord, the book which contains the history of the struggle by which the children of Israel, after they had been brought to the promised land under the leading of Moses, took possession of that promised land, destroying the people who possessed it before, and, so far as they were able at that time, rooting out all remembrance of those old inhabitants and their worship.

These wars of the Lord, therefore, having been thus brought under our notice, we naturally ask, what are we to say concerning them? what are they intended to teach us? why are they recorded? why are they read to us in Church? Many such questions must, I think, strike the minds of us all, and they probably all point to the difficulty of understanding how a religious character should have been given to such fierce and sanguinary conflicts. For let us ever bear in mind that they *were* fierce and sanguinary; the devastation of a country in those days was the same thing as

the devastation of a country in these days. When we read that Joshua smote a certain country and "left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed," we may not feel the same degree of horror as when we hear of a similar destruction of life taking place in modern times; antiquity throws a veil over what is horrible, and a person who would faint at seeing the death of an animal, can read without emotion of Joshua bringing out the five kings of the Amorites from their cave and slaying them in sight of his army and hanging them on five trees. Yet distance of time manifestly does not make things which are dreadful in themselves really less dreadful, any more than it can make sinful things less sinful; it only prevents us from realising the facts as we should if they were nearer to us; it makes them seem less than they are, just as distance in space will make a large building look like a cottage, and a man like an insect. These people whom Joshua slew however were *men*, and were not insects; they were created in God's image like ourselves, however much they had defiled that image; and therefore we must not pass over such wars as those of Joshua slightly and thoughtlessly, but must consider in what sense the history of transactions in themselves so horrible can be rightly regarded as a *proper lesson* for a congregation of Christians.

It is very easy for those who feel disposed to adopt the course to find fault with such books as that of Joshua altogether, and to say that they are not books to be read by Christians at all. They who do so would object to such a lesson as that which we have heard this morning; and they might point their objection by referring to another portion of Scripture which has been read to us to-day; I mean the Epistle. "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God: for God is love,"—*that* you will remember was the opening of the Epistle, and the remainder was in harmony with it: and a person disposed to carp might say, this is very good doctrine which the Epistle contains, and a pretty comment you have upon it in the first lesson for the day; the Epistle teaches you the excellence of brotherly love, and the first lesson shews you Joshua and God's chosen people Israel destroying their brethren without mercy, seizing upon their land, blotting out the remembrance of them from under heaven. Such an objection as this there are many who do not scruple to put forward boldly, but I do not suppose that there are any such here: may there not however be some, upon whose minds something of the kind often presses

itself? something which their Christian education and their reverence for God's Word lead them to stifle if they can, but which nevertheless from time to time gives them uneasiness, and upon which they would gladly have more light? If I did not think that there might easily be such persons here, or rather that a large number of thoughtful Christians are more or less such persons, I would not meddle with such a subject; as it is, I feel confident that I am endeavouring to deal with a subject of deep interest to very many minds.

The first remark which I will make is this, that the choice of proper lessons from the Old Testament is frequently of such a kind as to make us think, that they who selected them had views on the subject differing materially from those which in our own days are very common. The chapters chosen for proper lessons are frequently not those which would probably have been selected by modern divines; and sometimes chapters are read which some think it would be better not to read in public. I have known sometimes of clergymen omitting the appointed lessons, and selecting others for themselves. I am not intending to decide which is right, nor do I wish to assert that in all cases the chapters appointed are the very best which could possibly have been selected; but certainly

it is well to notice (if it be so) that they, who arranged our scheme of lessons, did so upon principles not thoroughly current in our own days. If we allow that this was the case, we shall be led to consider that at all events there is some probability of the principles adopted being sound principles, and such as we should not willingly interfere with, until we feel quite certain that we can substitute something better.

And that the lessons *were* chosen by men who thoroughly understood what they were doing, may be concluded from the circumstance to which I have already alluded, namely, the apparent contrast between the first Lesson and the Epistle of to-day. That contrast is too apparent to be missed by anybody; it could not be because they did not observe it, that the compilers of the Prayer-book allowed it to exist; it must have been because they thought that the teaching of the first lesson was so far from being opposed to the teaching of the Epistle, that it could be best understood and improved, when the two were taken in connection with each other.

However, persons may say that whatever might be the views of the compilers of the Prayer-book, there *is* a contrast between the doings of Joshua and Israel, and the teaching of S. John; a contrast between the God of Joshua and Israel, who is

said to have fought for Israel and gained their terrible victories for them, and the God of S. John who is emphatically *love* itself, and whose children are commanded to love one another. Therefore it will be well for us to look for a moment at the first lesson itself, and see whether it does not contain some important teaching for all times, and not least for our own times; whether we may not see in it something more than a mere register of the successes of Israel in their wars, and the extermination of Canaanites. And in endeavouring to do this, observe in the first instance, that as a matter of fact the history which we have in the Book of Joshua is part of the history of the Christian Church:—you think I have made a mistake, and that I mean to say part of the history of the *Jewish* Church: but no, I have not made such a mistake, and I mean what I said,—part of the history of the *Christian* Church. Some time ago the Professor of Church History at Oxford in giving his first lecture astonished many persons by saying, that his subject, that is, *Church History*, commenced with *Abraham*: instead of beginning with the commission of Christ to His Apostles, or with the birth of Christ Himself, or any such New Testament origin, he would make the call of Abraham the point of departure. I believe he was right. He was not the first

person to take this view, but still it is not a common view, and yet I think it is the true one. The calling of God, the election, the Church, has been continuous from the time of Abraham to the present time; the mustard-seed was planted when God took Abram from his country and his father's house, and made him a pilgrim to a strange land; and ever since then the mustard-seed has been growing, sometimes more rapidly and sometimes less so, sometimes (it may be) seeming to wither, and sometimes growing with extraordinary luxuriance, until it has become the great tree of Christ's Holy Catholic Church. Now, this being so, you will observe that the history of the children of Israel, or children of Abraham, is the history of the rise and progress of Christianity, of the foundation of Christ's kingdom: it may be that it is a painful history, a bloody history, a cruel history, but still it *is* the history; and it is useless for us to complain that the history has this character, unless we can shew that the Christian Church could have been founded in some other way, which we manifestly cannot. And thus, however strange it may seem, the work of Joshua in the Old Testament *did* lead to the work of the second Joshua in the New; he who declared that God is love was the descendant of him who slew the five kings of the Amorites; the one was the

forerunner of the other, and each in his own day was acting as he fully believed under the influence and inspiration of the same God.

When persons speak in a disparaging manner of the historical portion of the Old Testament, they seem to deal with it as if the sacred writers had set themselves down to invent a tale, which should illustrate the character and doings of God: it seems to be forgotten that these writers had to record facts, that they were historians, not writers of fiction. They wished to tell their readers, not how they thought the children of Abraham ought to have come into possession of Canaan, but how they actually *did* come into possession of it; and I suppose that no one will doubt the truth of possession having been taken much in the way which the Book of Joshua describes. It is the same kind of thing which has taken place continually, one people in a semi-barbarous condition thrusting out before them another people still more barbarous, and occupying their place. Our own country has been the scene of similar doings; our Saxon forefathers drove out the British occupants of this land, and took possession of it themselves. The great peculiarity of the history given in the Book of Joshua is this, that the battles and victories are all attributed to God; *He* is the Lord of Hosts, *He* is spoken of as a Man of war; and if this God be *He*

who is described in the Epistle as *love* itself, there may seem to be here something strange. But just let us consider for a moment what advantage we shall get by omitting this feature from the Book of Joshua: you will not have one battle less, or one cruelty less; the Canaanites will be equally dispossessed, the five kings of the Amorites equally slain and hanged on trees; the only thing will be that you will have no sense of a hand ruling the whole, bringing order out of disorder, bringing about its designs in a mysterious way, but making all tend eventually to the accomplishment of high and mighty purposes. Indeed, if you take God away from the history, whom will you put in His place? Will you give it all up to the Devil, and say that the spirit of evil was supreme, not only in the wicked practices and abominable cruelties and superstitions of the Canaanites, but also in the deeds of those who professed it to be their chief mission to wipe away the abominations with which the land was defiled? However strange the Old Testament account may seem, it is certainly a religious account; it certainly goes upon the principle that God is the judge, putting down one and setting up another. If you object to this mode of telling the story, then you must say that God had nothing to do with a series of events, which nevertheless terminated in the birth of Christ and in the preaching of the Gospel to the world.

That the Book of Joshua does thus attribute the successes of the Israelites to the hand of God is unquestionable; it represents the people themselves fighting with all their might, and Joshua as a brave captain leading them on with skill and courage: but there is ever another might besides that of the people brought into view, and another Captain of the Hosts of Israel besides Joshua. No chapter of the book perhaps could bring this feature out more distinctly than that which we have heard this morning. Just look at it again with a special eye to this peculiarity. We find Joshua ascending from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valour—the best army he could muster, you will observe; but in the eighth verse it is the LORD who says to Joshua, “Fear them not, for *I* have delivered them into thine hand.” Then in the tenth verse we read that “the LORD discomfited them before Israel;” in the next verse, that “the LORD cast down great stones from Heaven upon them,” so that more died by the hailstones than by the sword. Then we have the standing still of the sun and the moon (whatever may be intended by the phrase, which is a question upon which I do not intend to enter) explained upon the ground that “the LORD fought for Israel;” and so on throughout the chapter, until we come to the words which I have already

taken as a text. The burden of the whole, the lesson which it would teach an Israelite, the lesson which it ought to teach us, is this, that God was the real disposer of events, and that the Israelites triumphed because God had determined that they should triumph. And is not this the religious and true view to take of all history? You may say that it compels you to attribute to God the destruction of His creatures, the cruelties which men exercise upon each other. But this mode of putting the matter is calculated to mislead. We see great results brought about; we know that in almost all cases these results are mixed up with a good deal that is painful: every great birth, however joyful, has its throes and pains; and the question is whether, when we see the great and good result, we may not rightly attribute it to Almighty God, without making Him responsible for any of the evil which has accompanied the working of it out. God governs this world, not we: we know very little of the conditions under which it is governed, or of the ways in which it is possible that it can be governed; and therefore, when we see the history of a rude horde of slaves culminating in the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ and the preaching of His Gospel of peace to the world, is not the view which the first lesson gives us, exactly the view which we ought to take, namely,

that God was with that people, that *He* gave them their land, that *He* drove out their enemies before them?

As for the Heathen people whom the Israelites destroyed, is it not well that we should know that God is offended when His world is polluted by abominable crime and wickedness? We know that those people *did* pollute the earth; and the Israelites were appointed to sweep them from it. They were not to come upon them as a tribe of robbers, and seize their goods: on the other hand, they were to touch nothing that belonged to them; it was all accursed; it was all to be destroyed. It was a great act of divine vengeance; the Israelites could not mistake it for anything else; they saw sin punished, and they were told as plainly as possible, that as the heathen sinners had suffered, so should they also suffer if they forsook God's law. Indeed, as we well know, they did eventually prove by their own experience the truth of what God had said; and they became themselves a standing monument of the truth that God will punish sin.

Hence, therefore, it seems to me that the Book of Joshua, and especially such a chapter of the book as has been read to us this morning, so far from occasioning difficulties to our minds, ought to be regarded as conveying precisely that kind of

teaching which we most require. I do not know that there was ever an age of the world, in which men more needed such teaching. In these days of applied science, of steam and telegraphs, and the like, the tendency is to exclude God (so to speak) from His own world, to resolve everything into mere mechanical law, and keep out of sight the great Lawgiver. But the Book of Joshua teaches us that God does indeed govern the world; that He takes the land from one and gives it to another; that He is the God of battles, and that however much the heathen may rage, and the people imagine a vain thing, He is supreme over all, and causes the wickedness and folly of men to work out His great designs. Of course there must be mystery connected with God's doings; of course there must be difficulties; but we have taken the great practical step, which is necessary for our own peace and profit, when we have learned that in the midst of all apparent confusion God is still present, and that no creature can resist His will.

If we *have* taken this step, Christian Brethren, we shall best prove that we have done so by applying our conclusions to our own conduct and lives. Do we regard the God of Joshua as our God, ever fighting our battles, ever hating sin, ever punishing it if persisted in without repentance? This is

the great application which we have all to make ; this is the great lesson to be learnt from such books as those of Joshua. Obscurities I grant there may be, but one great light will shine forth for all simple humble readers, and it is that which exhibits the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as the same from one generation to another, as the avenger of sin, the hater of wickedness, and as having still counsels of peace and happiness for the earth, even when the prospect is darkest and hope and faith seem likely to fail. Lo, Christian Brethren, this God is our God for ever and ever ; He will be our guide even unto death !

SERMON VIII.

JOSHUA'S PARTING ADDRESS.

(Second Sunday after Trinity.)

JOSHUA xxiii. 11—15.

Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God. Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you: know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you. And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof. Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all good things are come upon you, which the Lord your God promised you; so shall the Lord bring upon you all evil things, until He have destroyed you from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you.

IN my sermon last Sunday morning,* I spoke to you concerning the wars of the children of Israel,

* See preceding Sermon.

by which they obtained permanent possession of the land of Canaan, those "wars of the Lord" in which Joshua was the chosen captain. I endeavoured to clear away some difficulties which very naturally connect themselves with the conduct of Joshua and the children of Israel,—difficulties which it might possibly have been unnecessary to notice, if they only supplied the occasion for a sneer to the ungodly, but which it can hardly be deemed unprofitable to dwell upon, when we consider how likely they are to rise up in the minds of devout Christians, and to cause them distress.

I need not repeat what I then said; but I wish to recall it in this passing manner to your minds, because the subject brought before us by the text which I have just read to you, follows very usefully upon that of last Sunday. In fact, the chapter from which I have taken the text was, as you will remember, the lesson for last Sunday evening; and I conceive that it must have been chosen for that purpose, because it comes with so much force while the morning lesson is fresh in mind. That morning lesson brought before us Joshua in full force and vigour, in the hot career of victory, collecting and drilling his men, leading them to battle after battle, taking towns, destroying kings, and making tremendous

havoc through the whole country. We saw, in fact, from that tenth chapter of Joshua, how it was that the children of Israel obtained possession of the land of the Canaanites. Joshua told them that it was a holy war, that God was with them, that He had commanded them to destroy the wicked inhabitants, and not to touch anything that belonged to them; and with this faith and persuasion they went on from one battle to another, till at last the country became theirs, and those of the inhabitants who were left were compelled to hide themselves in fenced cities. That chapter, then, was a compressed account of the days of Israel's battles and of Joshua's youth and vigour. The second lesson, from which I have taken my text this morning, was an account of the condition of things when God had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about, and when Joshua waxed old and stricken in age. Hence I say that the chapters may be profitably taken together, and the view which I endeavoured to give you last Sunday morning of the wars of the Lord, will be strengthened and made clearer by that which I propose to found upon the text of this morning. For now we see Joshua an old man, and able to look back upon his life from the last stage of his earthly career; and I apprehend that if a man would only tell us what he honestly

thinks of his life, when his life is drawing to a close, we should probably obtain as good and useful a view, as it would be by any means possible to obtain. For men are deceived sometimes by the heat and impetuosity of youth; they mistake their own lusts and passions for the justification of their deeds; they do not consider always what is righteous and worthy conduct with cool impartial eyes, and consequently often do things which they would condemn in others, and which, when they look back calmly afterwards, they feel constrained to condemn in themselves. Therefore anything said by Joshua, when old and well stricken in age, will be specially valuable as a comment upon his former life; it will help us more than anything else to put ourselves in his position, and so enable us to judge whether his life was really a righteous and religious life, however it may have been (as no doubt it was) a troublous and violent one.

Now look at the speech, which Joshua made to the children of Israel, and a part of which I have taken for a text, from this point of view. He calls all the people together, their elders, their heads, their judges, their officers, and he makes them an address, partly referring to the past and partly to the future. I will just call attention to some two or three of its leading features.

(1) In the first place, he once more presses upon the people their true character as the chosen people of the Lord God. This, you will remember, had always been the lesson which the leaders of Israel had been trying to impress upon them; Moses had been quite as strong upon the point as Joshua. The God who had revealed Himself to them and made promises to them, was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of their fathers, He who had called them in Abraham and made them His. It was from this point of view that they were to see everything else; it was this great truth which was to colour all other truths, and give a tone to all the people's thoughts and direct all their actions; this was the truth, in the faith of which all their battles had been fought and their victories won. They had been forbidden to regard themselves as a horde of barbarians, going out to seize upon a country, whenever they could find one in the hands of a people weaker than themselves; but on the other contrary, they had been bidden to regard themselves as a peculiar people, sent out to do God's work, and to take possession of a land from those who were much more powerful than themselves, and whom (humanly speaking) there seemed little hope of their being able to subdue.

What does Joshua say concerning this faith.

when he regards it as an old man just ready to be gathered to his fathers? He once more endorses it in the most solemn manner; but besides this, he is able *now* to appeal to facts in evidence of the truth, which had been once matter of faith; he is able *now* to point to what God has done, to call the people themselves to witness that all the promises of God have come to pass, and not one thing failed of all those which the Lord their God had promised them. There they were, in the land which they had once seen across the Jordan; the people great and tall, children of Anak, with their cities and castles fenced up to heaven, had disappeared before their arms; those that remained were compelled to hide themselves; and *they*, the poor slaves of Pharaoh king of Egypt, had in matter of fact become a great people, firmly settled in a land flowing with milk and honey. Observe how thoroughly consistent Joshua is now with what he was in early days. In those days he said, you must fight for yourselves because you are God's people, and God will fight for you. He was full of faith, full of courage; he had no doubt concerning God, if only the people would do their part well. Now in his old age he says, You have inherited God's promises; *He* hath fought for you; this has all come to pass, as *we* were sure it would

come to pass, who trusted in the promises which God made to your fathers.

(2) Joshua found then in his old age nothing to retract of what he had said in former times concerning God and the people, and the relation of the one to the other. And this impression is strengthened, when we observe the manner in which Joshua implores the people to guard against backsliding. Hitherto they had made a great and tremendous protest against idolatry and wickedness; but it was very possible for them to cease from making this protest, and so in reality belie their high calling and range themselves against God. They had been zealous in destroying Canaanites, as long as the land of the Canaanites was to be seized upon; but they might very possibly take another view of matters now that the land was theirs; they might be disposed to wink at idolatry, if it did not touch their possession of Canaan, and to be on good terms with the remnant of the Canaanites, if they would consent to live peaceably. It is clear that to adopt such conduct would be to retreat from the high ground which they had taken as champions of God, to throw suspicion upon their principle in the first attack upon Canaan, and to bring the God whom they professed to serve into disrepute and contempt. The subsequent conduct of the Israelites

shewed how possible and even probable all this was; and therefore Joshua earnestly warns them against it.

How easy it is to backslide! to adopt high principles, and carry them out to a certain point, and then to find them inconvenient, and take up with lower ones! How easy to feel zeal for God, while zeal for Him means taking care of ourselves; and how easy to let zeal die away, when it requires effort and self-denial to keep it alive! All this was neither more true nor less true in the case of the Israelites than in our own, but as true in one as the other, because thoroughly true in both. Hence Joshua says, Beware of going backwards! He does not say, your conduct hitherto has been violent and somewhat discreditable; perhaps circumstances may have excused it; only take care to adopt a different line in future. He does precisely the opposite to this: he says, Go on as you have begun, and God will bless you; your shame and misery and damnation will be if you turn back. Whatever we may think, it is clear that to Joshua, as an old man, looking back upon the course of his life, the battles he had fought seemed to him the Lord's battles, and the work he had done the Lord's work.

(3) Once more, looking forward to the future, Joshua declares that, in case of the Israelites going

back from their high position as God's people, God would punish them as severely as hitherto He had blessed them bounteously. The possession of the land had been the reward of obedience; the loss of the same would be the punishment of disobedience. I do not know whether the Israelites, or any of them, thought that this was an empty threat; but if they did, their children found out their mistake, and we know it too. We know that Joshua's words were verified twice over in the most remarkable manner. In the first instance the people went to Babylon, and did penance there during seventy years for the sins of idolatry and the like which they had committed: and in the second instance, when, having been restored to their land, they rejected Him who came to them with the message of peace and love, they were swept out of their land again, and have ever since continued as wanderers from the home which God gave them. We therefore are in a condition to appreciate Joshua's prophetic warnings, and I wish you to notice how true and dignified his words were; how well they correspond to the result, and how well they fit on also to all that had gone before. Joshua speaks as one who was privileged to look from the beginning to the end; he knew upon what principle the beginning had been made; he knew that it was a principle of righteousness and

truth, and therefore that the end would be brought in upon the same principle. What was that principle? simply this, that God had called the Israelites and made them His people, and would bless them as long as they did His work and walked in His ways; that He would punish them as soon as they rebelled, and did their own work or the devil's work, and walked in their own ways. Joshua's address to the people was all founded upon this; and because it was so, therefore his address was solemn and telling, and they who heard it never forgot it. It was not until the men of Joshua's date had all been gathered to their fathers, that the people began to run after idolatry, and forget what God the Lord had done for them, and what He had commanded them to do for Him.

I do not believe, Christian Brethren, that Joshua could have made such an address on such an occasion, unless he had been conscious of a divine vocation, and persuaded that his life had been given to doing God's work, however rough that work might sometimes have been. A man will scarcely play the hypocrite on that solemn day of all others, on which he is "going the way of all the earth;" and certainly anything like cant or hypocrisy would be the last fault that any one would dream of attributing to a brave old soldier

like Joshua. Hence I cannot but regard his closing speech as the best commentary possible upon the whole book of the wars of the Lord; in this light I am sure that it is very worthy of all the attention we can give it; and I may perhaps secure more attention for it and impress its character upon you more deeply, if I go on to take another view of it, and shew you (as I propose now in a few words to do) how easily Joshua's speech may be (if I may so speak) translated into *Christian* language; how exactly the *points* of the speech are those, which a Christian minister would desire to take up, and to press as strongly as possible upon the minds of his people.

You may fancy, if you please, a Christian minister taking leave of his people like Joshua, going the way of all the earth like him, and anxious to say some parting words which may remain in his people's minds. What should he say to them? I fancy that he might very well bring all that he would have to say under some such heads as those which I pointed out in Joshua's speech.

In the first place, he might call to mind once more that which he would no doubt have often impressed upon them, namely, that they were God's chosen people, members of Christ, children of God, heirs of heaven; he might assure them

that this was their true position, in faith of which they could resist the world, the flesh, and the devil, in forgetting which they would be liable to fall into manifold idolatries. Then he might speak of God's promises as connected with this call, and might (I think) appeal to the people themselves whether all had not come to pass as God promised. Of course, in one sense this could not be the case, because the full fruition of the blessing of God belongs not to this life but to the life to come; but still, those Christians, who had acted up to the privileges which God had given them, would be able to testify to the reality of God's promises, the truth of His Word, the grace of His ordinances, the depth of that peace, which in its fulness "passeth all understanding." Certainly if a Christian minister has been all his life leading his people against the world, the flesh, and the devil, preaching to them Christ's Gospel, and administering to them Christ's sacraments, he ought not to have to appeal to them in vain at the close of his ministry whether God's promises have really come to pass.

And if he thus insisted upon the position of Christians before God as His chosen people, and upon the reality of God's grace towards them, what could a departing minister desire to impress upon his flock more than that lesson which I have

already commented upon, as occupying so conspicuous a place in the address of Joshua—namely, the danger of backsliding? Ah, Christian Brethren, I believe that there is no one lesson which in average Christian congregations requires enforcing more than this. In a congregation like our own almost every one may be supposed to have made some progress on the way to heaven; we are all at least well taught concerning the nature of our faith and the calls of duty; we ourselves best know whether we practise or not. But then to some extent we *do* practise; we come here, professedly at all events, to pray, to hear God's Word, it may be to receive Christ's sacrament; the fear therefore that the minister of such a congregation must have is this, lest any of his people should be going backwards instead of forwards, becoming more conformed to the world instead of less so, wasting their treasure in Heaven daily, instead of adding to it like thrifty householders against the day when the blast of the terrible one comes like a storm against the wall. How many cases of such a kind may have come more particularly under my notice, how much grief they have caused me, it is not desirable that I should endeavour to declare; but I do say, that backsliding is the great danger of professing Christians; and that the loss of the land flowing with milk and honey,

which we see on a large scale in the case of the Israelites, is that which we have especially to fear in the case of each professing Christian, who becomes lukewarm in his profession, and does not do the Lord's work with heart, and soul, and strength.

Once more, how could a Christian minister, under the circumstances which I have supposed, fail to warn his people of the danger which they incur by going back from God? Joshua declared that evil things should come upon the people, if they rebelled, as great and terrible as the good things which they had received already had been wonderful and abundant. He was right; and the Israelites found out to their cost that he *was* right. If Joshua had not told them before, they might possibly have complained that they had had no warning; but Joshua *did* give them warning, and it was kindness on his part to do so. And if a Christian minister really loves his people, and desires their good, must he not, will he not feel himself constrained to speak concerning the vengeance of Almighty God, as earnestly as Joshua spoke concerning the same vengeance to the children of Israel? There is no mercy, no kindness, no wisdom in concealing this side of the truth. Our God is a consuming fire; yea He is a jealous God. He is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for

ever; and that character, which He declared for Himself amid the thunders of Sinai, has been reasserted for Him in the gentle volume of the New Testament, and has been made even more conspicuous by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am sure that a Christian minister, who knew that he was going the way of all the earth, and that he was speaking for the last time to his people in this world, would be thankful if the solemnity of the occasion could add any point to the language, with which he would declare the anger of God against sin.

Thus, as I have said, all the points of Joshua's speech might be taken up and applied by a Christian minister saying good-bye to a Christian congregation. And as the words of holy men of old are most useful to ourselves when thus taken up and applied, I would ask of you, Christian Brethren, to consider whether you are sufficiently alive to your high calling and profession and privileges, as baptized members of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ,—whether you are doing battle as vigorously as you ought against the world, the flesh, and the devil, against evil tempers and evil self, and vanity and folly and wickedness of all kinds,—whether you are guarding against backsliding in your religious course, and against the possibility of getting further from the road

to heaven as you are getting nearer to the way of all the earth,—and lastly, whether you think sufficiently of the danger of offending God, and of the awfulness of that judgment-seat, before which the living and the dead must alike one day stand?

SERMON IX.

KORAH, DATHAN, AND ABIRAM.

NUMBERS xvi. 8—11.

And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi : Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? And he hath brought thee near to him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee : and seek ye the priesthood also? For which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the Lord : and what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?

THE chapter which contains these verses, in addition to the general warning given by it concerning God's judgments against rebellion, seems to me capable of affording us some special and very useful teaching. In truth, so far as regards the general warning concerning God's judgments against rebellion, it is hard to say at what part of the history of the Israelites, after their exodus from Egypt, you can open without meeting with

something bearing more or less upon the subject ; and though the destruction of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram was a very signal judgment, it was only of a piece with many more. It is well for us to contemplate such judgments ; they bring the evil of sin and rebellion home to us in a very forcible way ; they are by far the most practical sermons that can be preached upon the text, "The wages of sin is death." When we hear that God is a just and jealous God, who will in no wise spare the guilty, we cannot suppress any wicked thoughts, such as Satan loves to put into our hearts, suggesting to us that in our case things will be different, that we shall not surely die,—we cannot suppress such wicked thoughts (I say) in any more complete way than by looking back to the instances, with which sacred history furnishes us, of the wrath of God manifested against sin. Hence the history of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram has a very general interest, inasmuch as they were sinners who ran into destruction : but inasmuch as they were sinners of a particular kind, as they sinned in a certain peculiar way, therefore there is more than a general interest belonging to the history ; and I think I shall be able to shew that there are points, in which the people of our own day may possibly be instructed by the peculiar kind of offense committed by these men.

Now what was the sin of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram? In few words it was this: they were discontented with the arrangement made for public worship by the choosing out of Aaron and his family to be priests. You will remember that when Korah and his company were destroyed, this was the moral of the destruction, "that no stranger which is not of the seed of Aaron come near to offer incense before the Lord."* Aaron and his family had been chosen out from the rest of the congregation to perform specially priestly duties: this was a divine appointment, and one might have imagined that all the congregation would have gladly acquiesced in it. What argument could be found against it? There was a very plausible argument found by Korah and his company, to which I desire particularly to direct your attention. We read that "they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?"† I call this a plausible argument, because it depends upon the great truth of the Lord being with all His people, consecrating and sanctifying them all, making them all

* Numbers xvi. 40.

† Ibid. xvi. 3.

in a certain sense Holy to the Lord, in a certain sense, Priests. It was an argument which seemed to have its root in a godly jealousy for the character of God and of His people, a wholesome dread of priestcraft, a desire that all the people should recognise their privileges and hold fast to the faith, that God was as near to the simplest of His people as He was to the high-priest himself. It was an argument too, which was likely to have weight with a large number of persons: because, while it had this plausible appearance of consulting for the honour of God, it did at the same time flatter the vanity of the people and strengthen them in the notion, (which so many persons seem to delight in more than almost any other,) that they were oppressed by their rulers.

What was the answer to this argument? One answer was this: when Korah and his fellows said to Moses and Aaron, "Wherefore lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?" they might reply, "We have done nothing of the kind: we have not lifted up ourselves at all: it is the Lord who has lifted us up, and not we ourselves." This *was* the answer, which was ultimately given, with very terrible emphasis, by the swallowing up of Korah and his company. In fact, nothing could be more false and cruel than for any one who knew the history to bring such

a charge against Moses and Aaron : from the first Moses had hung back from the work ; he was diffident of his powers, and probably foresaw something of the danger and difficulty of the task which he eventually undertook. And what did either he or Aaron gain by the task ? Continual disappointment and anxiety. It was no great privilege, to take a worldly view of the matter, that of being called to minister to such a stiff-necked people ; very little pleasure in the work, except that which arose from the sense of obeying God and of performing a great duty.

But if it were necessary to enter more into detail, I think that Moses and Aaron might have said these three things.

1. They might have said, that the clamour of the people was unreasonable, because God had not chosen the family of Aaron as priests for their own benefit. Of course it was an honour to be made a priest, a privilege in a certain sense to be permitted to approach God and offer up prayers and sacrifices ; but it was not for the sake of conferring that honour and that privilege, that the priesthood was instituted. And if it *did* confer honour and privilege, it was to be remembered also that it conferred responsibility and labour, and that the work of a priest was in its nature not a thing to be coveted by discontented people, the

office a thing not to be claimed as a right; but that every one who became a priest ought to be "called of God," as says the Apostle to the Hebrews, even as was Aaron.

2. Again, Moses and Aaron might have said, that as the priesthood was evidently not instituted for the selfish benefit of a particular family, so it was as evidently instituted for the general benefit of the people at large. What were the works of the priest? chiefly these—to make atonement, to offer sacrifice for his brethren, and to bless in the Name of the Lord; charity works these, by which the people at large were benefited. Korah and his company might possibly say that every man ought to offer sacrifice for himself. But, independently of the imperty of thus flying in the face of a divine appointment, it might be fairly said, that in all religions men had found it necessary to entrust the sacred services to particular persons. And I think that Korah could hardly say upon his conscience, that even if the thing were permitted, the work of religion would be likely to be so well attended to, if every one was left to himself to do what was right in his own eyes; he could scarcely doubt that the result would be this, that indifference would increase, until at length religion would be forgotten almost entirely.

3. And there would be one more thing, which

Moses and Aaron might have found it well to remark. Korah and his company had laid great stress upon the fact, that all the congregation of the Lord were holy: Moses and Aaron might very well have replied, that they for their part by no means questioned the fact. Moses had never represented the choice of Aaron and his family as a declaration, that they only of the people were holy. It is true that they were bound, by the very fact of their election to the priesthood, to study to be found pure and holy in the sight of God; unholiness would be a greater shame and a greater sin on their part, than on the part of others; they would receive greater condemnation than others, because sin on their part would go so far beyond themselves, and spread like a deadly disease amongst their brethren. But while all this was true, it was never asserted that they were better than the rest of the people, more undeniably holy, more sure of God's favour: nothing could be a greater mistake on the part of the people than to take this view of the priestly consecration, and nothing could be more fatal on the part of the priests than so to think of themselves.

In this way, then, it seems to me, that Moses and Aaron might very easily have shewn the unreasonableness of the jealousy and discontent of Korah and his company. I shall not dwell

upon the destruction which followed, because my purpose is not so much to shew that Korah was wrong by the consequences which he brought upon himself and those who joined with him, as to shew that he was wrong upon the clearest principles of reason and sound judgment. And having as I hope done this, I now proceed to regard the matter with special reference to ourselves, and to enquire whether, notwithstanding the altered circumstances of our own times, we may not learn something concerning the appointment which God has made of divers orders in His Church.

Now I shall not deem it to be necessary, when speaking in an English Church to persons professing to be members of the Church of England, to prove that God *has* appointed divers orders in His Church; nor do I see any reason why we should shrink from speaking of a Christian priesthood, seeing that such language has long been used in the Church at large, and is used in our own. But you are well aware that there is in practice great jealousy of this name, great fear of priestcraft, whether with or without reason, and a notion that it is the great glory of Protestants to have no priests. Very good reason why the name should be offensive may possibly be found in the unworthy conduct of those who

have borne it; but with this I am not concerned just now: what I chiefly wish to notice is the argument, by which the notion of there being in the Christian Church no such thing as a priesthood is supported. The argument then is this, and we have all heard it again and again; namely, that all Christians are priests, which in a certain sense is Scriptural and true; and because all Christians are in a certain sense priests, therefore it is argued that there can be no distinct priesthood. The argument, plausible as it seems, is in reality very little better than a play upon words; and it might be argued with almost as much force, that because Christians are said in one place to have been made kings as well as priests, therefore there can be no kings under the Christian dispensation. But the remark which chiefly belongs to my present subject is this; that, good or bad, the argument is as old as Korah, and is in fact precisely the argument which he and his company used, in order to shew that Aaron and his sons were not justified in deeming themselves a priesthood; the *whole* congregation is holy, said they, the Lord is among them, ye take too much upon you. So that if the argument be good for anything, it was good in the case of Korah; and if it was a foolish argument in his mouth, it is equally foolish when used in our own days.

Of course if God had made no appointment, then the argument that all the congregation are holy, or that all Christians are priests, would shew that one man was as fit as another to perform the services of God ; but if God has made an appointment, then the holiness of all the rest of the congregation has nothing to do with the matter. In fact, the argument of which I have been speaking leaves matters just where it found them, and does not determine either that it is right or wrong that there should be men called from amongst their brethren to minister for the rest in holy things. And if it were generally perceived that this is indeed the office of a priesthood, whether under the old or the new covenant, men would not think that they were claiming any great privilege for the Christian Church in claiming for her the right of being free from priests ; for under the new covenant, as under the old, there is need of persons who shall conduct the public worship of God, and offer the sacrifice of prayer and praise on the part of the congregation ; and if there were not divers orders appointed in God's Church, we should in reality be behind the Jews, instead of being in advance of them, in the matter of religious privilege. If it be merely intended to assert, that there is no special caste of men, who are holier than their brethren, who have greater

privilege of approaching God, or who have any right to lord it over God's heritage, and say to their brethren, "Stand apart, I am holier than thou,"—then it is at once admitted that this is all true. But it was as true in the time of Korah as it is now; the possession of a priestly office did not imply then, any more than it does now, that the man possessing it was holier, or better, or nearer to God, than his brethren; and the priest who thought so then, or who thinks so now, dishonours his office by the thought. The real privilege in both cases is that of ministering on behalf of others, serving God in His sanctuary; and he who does this the most simply and sincerely, and with the least thought of his own excellence or dignity or holiness, is the best and worthiest priest.

No doubt God's priests ought to be holy; there cannot be too high a standard of holiness. It is of more importance for the general welfare of the Church, that priests should be holy, than that others should be so; they are of necessity great examples either of good or evil, they are peculiarly "cities set upon a hill." But then all this is true for the Jews, as well as for ourselves: "the priest's lips should keep knowledge," said the Lord by the prophet, "for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts:" the priest's lips should keep knowledge in these days for precisely the same reason.

Moreover there is in all days the same weight of responsibility belonging to the priestly office, the same danger of being unworthy of it, the same difficulty in fulfilling it so as it ought to be fulfilled. Aaron might well ask, when he considered what was put upon him, and how much of the prosperity of the nation depended upon him, "what manner of person he ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness;" he might well ask, "who is sufficient for these things?" And the same kind of question may be equally asked in these days; indeed he may be safely said to be unworthy of the priestly office, to whom the assumption of it is not a matter accompanied by some misgivings, and to whom the discharge of it is not a source of some uneasiness. "Take heed to the flock," said S. Paul to the elders of Ephesus, "over whom the Holy Ghost has made you overseers;" what could have been said to the sons of Aaron so strong as that? and who can think of the responsibility attached to such an oversight, without trembling lest he should be found in the day of account to have discharged it unworthily?

And further, that same thing is true now, which was true in the time of Moses, namely, that priests exist not for their own sake but for the sake of their brethren. It is because the Church has needs which require to be supplied, that God has ordained

certain of the Church to minister to the rest ; this in fact is the character of priesthood in all days ; it is a *ministry*, a service ; it confers the privilege of working on behalf of others, of forwarding their salvation, of bringing sinners near to God. I do not say that the Christian priesthood have always remembered this ; and if they have forgotten it, there is no wonder if their brethren have forgotten it too. The priest may sometimes have fancied that he is a lord and not a servant, and that he is to be ministered to instead of being called upon to minister ; and then of course a wrong view of his office w'll quickly be taken up by others, and the office itself profaned. So it was in olden time too ; the sons of Eli profaned their office, and caused the people to sin grievously ; but it was because they forgot the true character of their priesthood, and the honour of the office to which they were called.

On the whole then, Christian Brethren, I think that we gain from the portion of Scripture to which I have been directing your attention, some valuable hints as to the manner in which the Christian priesthood should be regarded. There is a much nearer analogy between our own priesthood and that of the Israelites, than might be supposed from the way in which some persons speak of the subject. Differences there are of course : their priesthood belonged to a family, ours does not ;

their priests had to offer up burnt offerings, the offerings offered up by us are of a more spiritual kind; all the laws and arrangements which concerned that priesthood were more precise than those applicable to our own, as one might expect from the differences of the conditions of a nation under the law and one under the Gospel: but still there is the great common ground of ministry before God in behalf of others, which must be, as I conceive, at the basis of every religion. Hence both priest and people may learn a lesson. The priest may learn that his office does not imply that he is holier or better than his brethren, more honourable, or more beloved by God; but that it does imply greater responsibility, greater opportunities of good, greater sin if he does evil. And the people may learn to be gentle and considerate to those who are over them in the Lord, to honour them for their work's sake, not to be ready to find fault and condemn, but rather to be charitable, and forbearing, and gentle.

Christian Brethren, it is when the priesthood and laity of the Church thus regard each other that the whole body is healthy and flourishes. Far be it from me ever to arrogate a character which does not belong to us; but I am sure that the more highly we estimate our office as one conferred by Christ, the more thoroughly we are

persuaded that we have a gift which it behoves us diligently to stir up and improve, the more fruit of our ministry we shall by God's blessing be able to shew. And as for those to whom we minister, it is not by denying the existence of a Christian priesthood that they will magnify their privileges; rather it becomes them to thank God that He has appointed those, whose express office and business it is to minister to them in holy things. Thus it is that the Church of Christ is built up on Christ the corner-stone, each man having his office and calling, each his work to do; and God has made some prophets, some apostles, some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of one another in love.

SERMON X.

DAVID'S SIN.

2 SAMUEL, xii. 13, 14.

And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord.

And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.

DAVID, as you well know, is called in one place a man "after God's own heart." It is a name which may be rightly applied to him, one to which we may consider him entitled without any breach of honesty or any winking at sins from which our hearts shrink. Regarded in certain lights, the character of David is noble and lovely, and I should be quite prepared to defend it against the malice of the ungodly or the scoff of fools. But then on the other hand I am quite ready to admit David's infirmities and to deplore his sin: nay, I think it quite right to dwell upon and examine

his sin, and I purpose to do so in this sermon. I shall do so however with a purely practical purpose; that is, I shall endeavour to shew you the peculiar malignity of David's sin, in order that we ourselves may take some lessons from it for the guidance of our own steps in life.

With regard to the sin itself I shall content myself with observing to you, how in this, as in so many other cases, the breaking of one commandment led to the breaking of another. David began by breaking the tenth commandment; he coveted his neighbour's wife. And this sin, which might in the case of some persons have ended there, with him did not; because, being a king, and as king having that despotic power which Eastern kings usually had, there was only a short distance between coveting and possessing. David of course should have known, and doubtless did know, that this breach of the tenth commandment was wrong; but he did not check the wicked desire in his mind, allowed himself to dwell upon it, and so was led to break the seventh commandment as well. But the crime could not stop here. Bathsheba was the wife of Uriah, one of David's famous men of war. David cannot possess his stolen prize in peace as long as Uriah lives; therefore Uriah must be put away; the thought of murder rises, and this too is soon put in execution, and Uriah is treacherously

brought to his death: the sixth commandment broken, you perceive, because the seventh had not been kept. And so the chain is complete; the tenth leads to the seventh, and that to the sixth. In this respect there is no difference between this history and that of most sins; they do in general spring in the same way one from another. The sixth commandment is seldom the first to be broken; the tenth, in some one of its forms, perhaps generally leads the way; it is the most easily broken, because it refers to the thoughts and intents of the heart; but it is seldom the only command which a man breaks; if he breaks this, he generally goes on in his course, and who shall say where he will stop?

However, it is more to my present purpose to pass on to the results of David's sin. Those results belong to two classes, and may be considered, as they affected himself, and as they affected the cause of religion and godliness: the text brings both before us. Nathan tells David that he has given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, and that therefore the child born to him shall die. On his repentance expressed to Nathan, a certain kind of pardon is promised: "I have sinned against the Lord," said David; "The Lord also hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die," replies Nathan. So that the crime, if one

may so speak, was treated as gently as possible: there is a ready answer of grace at the first expression of repentance, "thou shalt not die." Nothing can be more gracious than that; and yet I wish to shew you that, notwithstanding this gracious promise, David's sin was visited in a manner very clear, very awful, very painful. I do not refer merely to the loss of his child when I say this; that loss no doubt cost him much sorrow, as you may easily see from the history of his conduct upon the occasion; but it would have been as nothing had it been all. Far from being all however, it was rather the type of a number of grievous visitations which came upon him afterwards and followed him for years. These visitations came upon him and afflicted him in two ways, first in respect of his family, secondly in respect of his kingdom. And do you not perceive how God's retributive justice was shewn in the fact that this was so? For as regards the family relations, these were exactly what David had set at nought in the matter of Uriah. He had not regarded his neighbour's family as sacred; his own selfish lusts must needs be supreme, and, according to the parable of Nathan, the poor man's lamb must be taken when the rich man had flocks and herds in profusion. Then as regards his kingdom, David had in a very fearful manner violated his duty as king in this

matter: the power given to him that he might rule in the fear of God, and for the happiness of his people, he had prostituted for unworthy purposes; and the very murder of Uriah itself would not have been possible, if it had not been for the royal power of David, which ought to have been used rather for the protection of his subjects' lives. His duty as the head of a family, and as the head of a kingdom, had therefore been alike set at nought, and his sin found him out in both ways, and destroyed the peace of his family and banished him for a time from his throne.

Now let me go into a few particulars. First as regards his family; you will observe how that immediately after this sin of his, family troubles of the most grievous kind commenced. I shall only allude to the story of Tamar, and observe to you how that one and the same transaction involved the disgrace of a daughter, the murder of one of David's sons, and the flight of another. In fact, noting, as we cannot have failed to note, the great love towards his children, which was ever prominent in David's character, it is perhaps hardly possible to think of a much more sorrowful affair than that to which I am now referring. But it was not the only one; it was followed by that rebellion of Absalom, which with all its accompanying circumstances must have been one of the most

grievous afflictions that ever fell upon David. The careful orders which David gave to spare the young man's life, when he found himself in a condition to put down the rebellion, and the exceeding grief to which he gave utterance, when notwithstanding his orders Absalom was slain, sufficiently shew the trouble and pain of mind, which were caused by this wilful and rebellious son. How could it have been otherwise? Even if David had not been a fond father and Absalom not a favourite child, and if the rebellion had been clear of some of its coarser and more unnatural features, it would have been bad enough. But as it was, every little circumstance which possibly could have added to the bitterness of the pain seems to have been added. For instance, the fact of Ahitophel, upon whom David leaned as a faithful and loving counsellor, having taken part against him and thrown his influence into the scale of the rebellion. Nothing indeed was wanting to give full and very dreadful fulfilment to the prophetic words, in which Nathan denounced to David the punishment of his crime.

What I have now said will be sufficient to call to your minds the manner in which David suffered in his own family after his great and terrible sin; but his troubles in his kingdom, what we should call his *political* troubles, were also very grievous.

In a few words they came to this, that David, who had been so prosperous, and had seen his kingdom as it would seem established, was thrown down from his throne, and became for some time an outcast, his own son being the man to dethrone him. And though he was brought back again, and became prosperous, and died in full power, still I should think that he never again had that feeling of peace and security which he once had; indeed it appears clear, from the account which we have of his last hours, that in point of fact he did not feel altogether peaceful and secure. But whether or no, certain it is that the troubles of David in later life must have affected his mind in a very different manner from that in which he regarded those of his young days. Those he knew to be undeserved, the result of jealousy, the indirect consequence of his faith and obedience to God; therefore they could be borne with a cheerful, even with a merry heart; but these latter troubles had the peculiar sting belonging to them, that he himself had sinned. The one had God's smile to make them light and bearable; the other had His frown to give them a bitterness, which otherwise they could not have had.

But after all, the results of David's sin, as they affected himself in his family and kingdom, were as nothing when compared with the results as they

affected the glory of God and the cause of true religion. Nathan told David most truly, that his crime had made the Lord's enemies to blaspheme. Well it might! As Satan watched the holy life of Job and longed to make him pollute it, and as no greater triumph or satisfaction could have been afforded him than to have seen Job in his affliction curse God and die, so was it no doubt in the case of David. The enemies of the Lord would look upon him as Satan looked upon Job: they would hate his faith and his obedience, and they would be glad to have good proof that he who seemed so pure, so holy, so strong in the faith of God, was after all no better than themselves. Satan would rejoice; nothing better could happen for *his* kingdom than that David should fall into sin. And when the sin was actually committed and had become notorious, you may fancy what exultation it would cause. The shock to which it would give rise would be mixed in the minds of his subjects with the comfortable feeling, that they might find in it a palliation for their own sins.

Nor was it only David's own kingdom and his own age to which this is to be referred. The pinnacle upon which David was set made his fall infinitely more conspicuous than it would otherwise have been; the same acts might have been

committed by many of his subjects without doing a thousandth part of the mischief: and I am not the first to observe, that there has probably never been a sin committed, which has so opened the mouths of blasphemers and given such a handle to the ungodly, as this of David. Here was the side of his sin which really shewed its great atrocity. If he could have borne the results of it himself, it had not been so dreadful; if his own tears and lamentations could have washed away its stain and caused it to be forgotten, it would have been a slighter matter;—but no, it never can be washed away; it lives now; and (which may seem strange) it lives just because it is written on the page of Holy Scripture itself. We in this day should have known nothing of David's fall, if it had not been for the candid witness of that book, which has also spoken of him as the man chosen of God to do His will; and the hundreds of sneers which have been vented at this sin would have been impossible, if it had not been for the honesty of that very book, against which the sneers are directed. However, the scandal remains, and so long as the world lasts the enemies of the Lord may, if they please, point to the inconsistency of David's conduct, and make themselves merry with the notion of a religious

life, and find satisfaction in the thought that David was no better than themselves.

To us, Christian Brethren, I trust that it would be more pleasing to throw a veil over this unhappy crime. Even though a man be not possessed of a very high sense of religion, yet if he be not actually given to vice himself, he would, I should imagine, contemplate with real pain the contrast between David the adulterer and the murderer, and David the noble-minded, single-hearted shepherd boy. I have said to you, that so far as we ourselves are concerned, I would not invite you to the consideration of such a subject, except for a purely practical purpose; and that purpose is this, that you may recognise in the history and the results of David's wickedness the true character of sin at all times. Whatever else it may be, the tale which we have been considering is a monument to all generations of the weakness of the best of men, the power of Satan, and the tremendous results of yielding to his temptations. Though David's transgression may lead men to blaspheme, it may also lead them to serious thought, and to lamentation on his account and circumspection on their own.

For on looking upon the story, how can we refrain from indulging in some such reflections as these?

First we may consider, that previous faith and holiness are no certain guarantee against the craft and subtilty of the Devil. I do not mean that a man who has led a righteous life is not better armed against temptation than a man who has led a life less holy; but still a man may not presume on his faith and holiness: he who has been proof against one temptation may be taken by another; and no one is safe from assault and sure of standing firm, as long as he carries about with him the burden of the flesh. Nay, I think it possible that the very excellence of a man's conduct in certain respects may be taken advantage of by Satan, for the purpose of catching him unawares, and attacking him successfully on another side; and so the fearless conqueror of a Goliath may be led captive and ruined by a Bathsheba.

Again, we may reflect that in our case, as in that of David, the eminence of a man ~~only~~ makes his sin the more conspicuous and the more deadly in its effects. ~~In a certain sense~~ David obtained pardon for his sin; "thou shalt not die:" but in a certain sense his sin could receive no pardon, just because he stood forth so prominently as a servant of God. And this a true servant of God must ever remember: he has no right to reason, that because he loves God, God will not forsake him, ~~and that if he sin God will pardon~~

for every man must

~~him; it is an immoral condition of mind, which permits him so to reason.~~ The ~~much greater~~ question ~~with him should~~ be, what will be the result of sin on my part, not to myself only, but to the cause of Christ, to the character of religion? And so putting the question, he will perceive that there are results over which he can have no control, that the mere escape of himself from personal consequences will not be the same as the blotting out of the sin. There may be in God's mercy the assurance, "thou shalt not die;" but the deadly character of the sin may shew itself in the death of the innocent, and (as with David) it may cause greater pain to watch the agonies which our sins have caused, than to suffer death ourselves. Nor is this all; such a scandal may be caused, that generations shall not see the end of it; and the more highly reputed a man has been for piety and holiness, the more possible does it become for him to incur in full measure that curse, which the Lord pronounced against those, who put stumbling-blocks in their brother's way.

Furthermore ~~we may consider, that~~ as a matter of fact, men are kept back from Christ as much by the inconsistency of His professed disciples as by any other cause whatever. The common plea of being as good as our neighbours is but the expression of this fact; people instinctively look to

those round about them, and judge themselves by them; and if they pass muster according to this standard, they are satisfied. It is obviously a very false and foolish way of reckoning, because it assumes that people in general are what they should be, and this probably is not the case; still it is a natural way, and one of which we shall never get rid. Acting upon this principle, how convenient for those who do not wish to be disturbed in their easy ways, and how terrible to the cause of holiness, is an inconsistency, still more a *fall*, on the part of a man reputed to be beyond his neighbours in godliness! Or even without this, how thoroughly is the edge of a clergyman's arguments turned, if those, who appear to be walking in the ways which he points out, are in common matters, matters of honesty, or temper, or liberality, or modesty, or the like, no whit better than the rest! Especially in the case of Church ordinances, and above all the Holy Communion, how completely are pulpit arguments set aside in practice, if men can say that those who come to the Lord's table seem to be no better for coming! Ah, these are the real obstacles to the spread of Christ's kingdom, these are the preachers whose lessons are practised, these are the arguments on the side of carelessness and ungodliness, which it is so difficult to reach, so nearly

impossible to overcome. I will undertake to say that the inconsistencies of professed Christians have, beyond all other things which can be named, weakened the power of the Gospel; and contrariwise, it was the consistency of Christians, the correspondence between their profession and their acts, the purity and circumspection of their lives, which, in the early days of the Church, when it had to fight its way against fire and sword, and tortures and cruelty, and mockery and calumny and insult, enabled the servants of Christ to triumph over the persecution of men and the deadly onslaught of devils. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal," said the Apostle; no—and this weapon was one of them, the weapon of a holy consistent life; and therefore, like other spiritual weapons, it was "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds."

Finally, therefore, Christian Brethren, let me beg of you all to consider as Christians, how much depends upon your own consistent lives. It is not as though you could pay your own penalties for inconsistency: you may suffer for any sins you may commit, and doubtless you will suffer; but there is much more than this. If you make the enemies of God to blaspheme, if you give Satan an advantage, if you put a stumbling-block in your brother's way, if you keep the little ones

from Christ—how *can* you compensate for this? No tears of yours can wipe out an offense against the precious souls of men for whom Christ died. No sorrow or lamentation or suffering can make amends for mischief, which may have been done by the carelessness and inconsistency of those, to whom others look for example and guidance. Therefore, let your light shine, not only that your own way may be bright and clear, but also that men, seeing your works, may glorify their Father in Heaven, and may be guided in the road to Heaven themselves.

SERMON XI.

THE FALSE PROPHETESSES AND EZEKIEL.

EZEKIEL xiii. 17—23.

Likewise, thou son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, which prophesy out of their own heart; and prophesy thou against them, and say, Thus saith the Lord God: Woe to the women that sew pillows to all armholes, and make kerchiefs upon the head of every stature to hunt souls! Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and will ye save the souls alive that come unto you? And will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear your lies? Wherefore thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I am against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make them fly, and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go, even the souls that ye hunt to make them fly. Your kerchiefs also will I tear, and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life: therefore ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations: for I will deliver my people out of your hand: and ye shall know that I am the Lord.

THE passage which I have taken for a text is rather long, but I could not conveniently shorten

it. I have chosen it, partly because there are some points in it which need explanation, and which I fancy must seem obscure to many who read it; and partly because it is very well calculated to put before your minds in a striking manner the general spirit and principle of Ezekiel's prophetic book.

Let me then begin what I have to say to you by calling to your minds the circumstances under which Ezekiel spoke the words, which form the book of his prophecy. If you look at the opening chapter, you will find that it was in the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity, when Ezekiel was among the captives by the river Chebar, that the heavens were opened and he saw visions of God: then it was, as we read, "that the word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel the Priest." The history of the captivity of king Jehoiachin is given at length in 2 Kings xxiv. He was the son of that king Jehoiakim concerning whom the Scripture history gives so evil a report, and he unfortunately followed the example of his father. "He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord," says the history, "according to all that his father had done;" and I suppose that he could not very easily have done worse. It was during the reign of this ungodly king that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came up against Jeru-

salem and besieged it, as Jeremiah had prophesied that he would ; and God gave the city over to his hands, and the heathen king of Babylon was made an instrument for the punishment of God's chosen people and of their wicked king. Nebuchadnezzar sacked the city, took for himself all the treasures of the palace and the golden vessels of the Temple which Solomon had made, and carried away Jehoiachin and his mother and his wives and all the great people of Jerusalem, so that none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land. It would be a very sad time for all the nation ; even those, who cared little for the Temple and the worship of God, would be cast down, when they perceived that their own happiness was bound up with the prosperity of the Temple, and that when the worship of God was stopped they themselves lost their liberty. But it would be an especially sad time for those, who, like Jeremiah and Ezekiel and the few who were faithful to Jehovah, grieved over the ruin of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, not so much because it involved the misery of men, as because it implied the destruction of the sanctuary of the One true God.

Ezekiel himself was one of the captives. He was a priest, and must have felt the pain of captivity all the more on that account. O ! how often would his mind go back to the scene of his

ministrations in Jerusalem! How earnestly would he pray God to bring again the captivity of Zion, and to support him and his brethren in their sore troubles! I think also we may believe that he would endeavour to bring some of the people to a better state of mind, and teach them to see, in the misery which had come upon them, the chastising hand of God. But for five years Ezekiel had no special commission: during that time perhaps he was being trained himself, and perhaps gaining experience, and learning what the spiritual condition of the people really was. Five years might be very well spent in doing this; anyhow it was not until the fifth year of the captivity that Ezekiel became a prophet, and received an express message from God. What was the nature of his message? It is shortly described as contained in a book, which "was written within and without,"—on both sides of the parchment, as though there was not even a corner to spare,—“with lamentations and mourning and woe.” It was a heavy message, because it was sent to a rebellious people: it would no doubt have been lighter, if the people had shewn signs of penitence: but when Ezekiel commenced his mission, they had already had (as you have seen) five years of severe discipline. If they had been foolish enough to mock at Jeremiah’s warnings in days gone by, before

Jerusalem was taken, surely they might have learnt better than to mock, now that the threatenings had been all fulfilled. But, for anything that appears to the contrary, the minds of the people had not been changed in the least; and therefore there *could* be no message of peace. The true commencement for the Gospel to them must be the preaching of repentance and sorrow; and what they needed more than anything else was plain homely statements, such as those which Ezekiel gave them; they required that their consciences should be touched, the sense of sin vigorously impressed, the condition in which they stood plainly and honestly declared. This was Ezekiel's work: it was to inspire him for this work that the heavens were opened to him; it was to enable him to preach to the people with effect and with power, that the word of the Lord came expressly to him, and that the hand of the Lord was upon him.

This, I say, was Ezekiel's work; and now what was there to hinder it? Of course there was all that hardheartedness and stiffneckedness, which belongs in a measure to all men who have fallen into sinful ways, and which belonged in a special degree to the Jewish people; and there was all that readiness, with which we meet in ordinary life, to shift the responsibility, to lay the blame upon some one else, or to find fault with the cir-

cumstances in which we are placed; or even boldly to kick against God's providence. But the peculiar difficulty with which Ezekiel had to contend was this, that there was a sort of men, who, under the pretence of being prophets, were always engaged, and very successfully engaged, in counter-acting his work; they were men who "prophesied out of their own hearts, and had seen nothing;" the Heavens had not been opened to them; they had nothing but lies to give to the people. But they sold their lies so cheap, and moreover the lies were so very pleasant and palatable, that they apparently could get a hearing, when Ezekiel, with his bitter truths, could gain no hearing at all. Their constant theme was that the captivity would soon be over, and Jerusalem be again built as a city which is at unity with itself. They had visions of peace, when there was no peace; and one supported another; and they all spoke so confidently and pretended so boldly to an inspiration from on high, that the people would generally be induced to say, "Why listen to Ezekiel with his long homilies about sin and repentance? these men preach the Gospel we want! they tell us of mercy and of nothing else! we have nothing to do but to be patient for awhile, and then we shall once more see Jerusalem in prosperity."

It is easy to perceive how immensely mis-

chievous this kind of teaching would be. Had a certain number of the people persecuted Ezekiel on account of his unpleasant sermons, the result would probably have been to further the truth of God; such persecution would not only have raised up a party on his side, but it would have led many persons to think, "Surely Ezekiel must be right, and his enemies know that he is right; and it is because they know this and cannot contradict him, that they hate him and persecute him." But the line of conduct adopted by the false prophets was mischievous, chiefly because it was different from this. They stood upon their mission from God, as Ezekiel did. Ezekiel said, "Thus saith the Lord;" so did they. Ezekiel called himself a prophet; so did they. And what was likely to come of this? Why surely that the people would take the message they liked best; and the easy comfortable messages of the false prophets would form a kind of shield or cushion to prevent the darts of Ezekiel from even touching the surface of their skin.

Hence I think that we need not be at all surprised, when we find the message of God by His prophet directed not to the people so much, as to those who were misleading the people; woe denounced, not so much against the wandering sheep, as against the wicked unprincipled shepherds. But in the passage which I have taken for a text, we

see the mischief, with which Ezekiel had to contend, brought out in still stronger colours. False prophets were not enough, there must be forsooth false prophetesses besides. "Set thy face," said the Lord to Ezekiel, "likewise against the daughters of thy people which prophesy out of their own hearts." The same charge, you perceive, brought against them as against the prophets, that they invented their own prophecies, and spoke soft and pleasant things to the people when Ezekiel was speaking the contrary. I should apprehend that the prophetesses would be worse than the prophets; they would know better how to turn a smooth flattering message; they would influence many, whom the prophets could not touch. At all events the cause of falsehood would be enormously and fearfully strengthened, when it was perceived that men and women were stirred up alike; that they sang a hymn of joy and triumph in perfect harmony, and vied with each other in drowning Ezekiel's melancholy threatenings. Who would not have been disposed to believe, that the good news of peace to Jerusalem *must* be true, when there was such evidence of the Lord having poured out His Spirit upon all flesh, and having made both His sons and daughters to prophesy?

But here I must pause a moment, for the pur-

pose of endeavouring to explain some language used concerning these false prophetesses, which is undoubtedly obscure, and of which indeed I have not been able to determine with certainty the precise meaning.

You will remember that the words of the text run thus: "Thus saith the Lord God, Woe to the women that sew pillows to all armholes, and make kerchiefs upon the head of every stature to hunt souls." Obscure language this undoubtedly, but still we may perhaps be able with a little care to see something of its meaning. And first with regard to the pillows, which it seems that these prophetesses put under the arms or the elbows of those who came to consult them. It was, I should suppose, a symbolical act, intended to convey an answer by way of parable. We read of this kind of dealing very frequently. Thus when Ahab consulted the prophets whether he should go up to Ramothgilead,* we read that "Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made him horns of iron, and said, Thus saith the Lord, With these shalt thou push the Syrians, until thou have consumed them;" the horns of iron, you will observe, symbolical of the success which Zedekiah promised. So again, to take an example from quite another part of Scripture,† we read that a certain prophet, named

* 1 Kings xxii,

† Acts xxi. 11.

Agabus, "took Paul's girdle and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle;" a symbolical act again, teaching by action to the eye what the prophet announced by word of mouth to the ear. And so in other instances. Now it seems to me very probable, that the pillows spoken of in the text had something of this symbolical kind involved in them. The prophetesses wished to assure the people, who came to them, of peace and ease and emancipation from slavery; what more likely than that they should not only give promises of these good things to come by word of mouth, but cause the people, who applied to them, to sit at ease, to be propped up with pillows, as a sign and token of the condition of peace and rest and ease which they promised in their prophecies?

In like manner I think it probable, that the handkerchiefs which the prophetesses put on the heads of their votaries—"on the heads of every stature," as the text has it; rather "on the heads of persons of all ages,"—these handkerchiefs (I say) were probably an emblem of liberty; just as you may remember, in the revolutionary troubles on the Continent years ago, hearing of people wearing *caps of liberty*. And when the prophetesses placed these handkerchiefs on the heads of those who

came to them, it was probably intended to declare by a parable, that the people would soon be free and not subject to the king of Babylon any more.

This is the kind of explanation, which I should feel disposed to give of the pillows and the handkerchiefs spoken of in this somewhat obscure passage. It might possibly be a mere juggling trick; I mean that the matters alluded to might possibly only be part of a system of quackery, by which the false prophetesses excited the imaginations of those who came to them, and prepared them to receive with more confidence the foolish prophecies which they had to deliver. But, whichever may be the right explanation, I observe that one ground upon which the 'woe' against the prophetesses is based remains untouched. You will remark, that not only is the dealing of the prophetesses found fault with, but it is particularly blamed because it was *the same to all*; there was only one message, and that one of peace for Jerusalem, one of joy in the future. There was no examination of the spiritual condition of those who came, and adapting the message accordingly. Whether men came to them in broken-hearted grief, under a deep sense of their own sins and those of the people, and full of gloomy forebodings concerning the future; or whether they came with

careless hearts, and with no feeling of unworthiness and no touch of repentance, the treatment was all the same; the penitent and the impenitent had the same pillow to rest upon, and the same cap of liberty put upon the head. Their lies (as we read in the text) made sad the hearts of the righteous, and strengthened the hands of the wicked; the righteous could find no explanation of the ways of God, and the wicked received hopes which could never be realised; and meanwhile God's teaching by the mouth of Ezekiel was flatly contradicted, and confusion and schism was introduced into the Church, and God's government was set at defiance. All this too for very paltry gain: these prophetesses demanded their fee, but it was a very slight one; a handful of barley, or a piece of bread; and for this wretched reward they were content to pollute God among His own people, and to tell those who applied to them anything which they desired to hear. I am sure that if we endeavour to imagine this state of things in our minds, and consider the utter confusion which would be produced, and the fearful manner in which the lessons of Ezekiel and his messages of lamentation and mourning and woe would be neutralised and made of none effect, we shall not be surprised that God pronounced a very grievous woe against these prophetesses, and promised as

a special boon to His people that they should be delivered out of their hands.

Now, Christian Brethren, what are we to learn from the condition of things which I have been endeavouring to set before you? I should say in general, that we turn the history to good account by bearing this in mind, that we all have our Ezekiel to tell us the truth, and that we all have our false prophets and prophetesses ready to contradict the truth and to substitute lies in place of it. Ezekiel stands to us as the type of the true messenger of God: he may represent the Book of Holy Scripture, he may represent the voice of conscience, he may represent the exhortations of parents and teachers, he may represent a sermon, or a catechism, or a tract; nay, he may even represent some illness which has brought us near the grave and lifted for a moment the curtain of the unseen world, or some apparent accident which has startled us in the midst of carelessness and compelled us to think of the reality of a judgment to come. If I may so speak, situated as we (by God's mercy) are, we have prophets around us continually, willing to tell us the truth, if only we be willing to receive it. Why *not* receive it? Because it is often unpleasant. Many of us do things which we know we ought not to do; we indulge our appetites as they ought not to be

indulged; we pursue pleasure as it ought not to be pursued; we give way to vanity and love of dress and finery in a manner unworthy of those who have renounced the world's pomps and vanities; we let ourselves be carried away by our tempers; we let our tongues run riot; or we love self and forget God; or we try to serve two masters; or in some one or more of the thousand possible ways we do what we ought not to do; that is, we commit sin. What says Ezekiel? He tells us that we must repent of all these doings; he assures us that God does not wish the death of a sinner, that God has in fact sent His Son into the world in order that we might live and not die. But still he tells us that we must repent; that we must correct what is amiss; that we must examine what our sins are and forsake them; that though it be a right hand and a right eye which are at stake, they must be plucked out or cut off and cast away, rather than sin be allowed to remain unmolested.

It is a hard saying, Ezekiel! Is there no one else with more comfortable doctrine? no one who can lead us at once into green pastures and beside waters of comfort, without compelling us to weary our limbs, and cut our feet, by trudging up this narrow stony road? Yes, there are abundance; abundance of prophets and prophetesses too, who have always visions of peace for those who ask

their aid, be they who they may. There are arguments addressed to the reason, and arguments addressed to the feelings. All arguments which can be founded upon the goodness of God, His mercy, His lovingkindness, upon what He has Himself done for us through Jesus Christ, and what He has promised that He will do for us; all arguments which can be founded upon our condition in this world, upon the innocent character of this pleasure and the pardonable character of that, upon the necessity of doing as other people do, and the like;—all these arguments are brought to bear for the purpose of keeping us at ease, and preventing us from alarming ourselves about the future. And the worst part of the whole matter is, that there is some truth on the side of these arguments; it is always *half-truths*, which are the most mischievous lies. Those prophets and prophetesses in Ezekiel's days were speaking half-truths; they said that God was merciful, so He was; they said that peace was coming upon Jerusalem, and so in a certain sense it was; they said that the people should be delivered from their bondage, and we know that many years afterwards they *were* delivered; and all that the prophets spoke was so apparently consistent with God's character, as a God of mercy, that the people were almost sure to clap their hands and say, "this

is the Gospel for us." And yet to all intents and purposes, as concerned the people who applied to them, the pretended messages of the prophets were as false as false could be. Those people who came to them came impenitent and in their sins,—then there was no mercy for *them*, no peace for *them*, and to talk in general of God's mercy and His goodwill towards Jerusalem was but to encourage these impenitent sinners to go on, and sin as they had done. Are not we to learn a lesson from this, Christian Brethren? May not we, the ministers of Christ's Gospel, make a fearful and dangerous mistake, if we ever cry Peace, Peace, and nothing else? Charged as we are with a ministry of reconciliation, and entitled as we are to proclaim that there is no repented sin which the blood of Jesus Christ cannot wash away, still are we not bound to mingle another message with that of peace, namely, the message of warning? Are we not bound, like Ezekiel, to speak of lamentation and mourning and woe, if men will not turn to God with all their hearts? Is not sorrow for sin as necessary now as ever? Do we not all need to be reminded that the Christian life is one of earnest warfare, and that victory and rest are for those who have fought the good fight?

Then I would say in conclusion, Christian Brethren, fight this good fight, hold fast the faith,

lay hold upon the promises; and in the strength which God by His Holy Spirit will give you, contend earnestly and sincerely against sin, the world, and the devil, and continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants until your lives' end.

SERMON XII.

MICAH'S VIEW OF HUMAN DUTY.

MICAH vi. 6—8.

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

THE question which is asked here, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?" is one which it becomes every man to ask, and which I should hope that most of us have asked; I should hope also that we have been able to obtain a satisfactory answer to the question. The manner in which a man shall come into the presence of God, the spirit of mind with which he shall bow himself in the presence of the Almighty, the petitions he shall

make, the ground upon which he shall beg for the pardon of his sins and for grace and mercy—these all and the like are matters which every one must consider with himself earnestly, so soon as he determines to go solemnly into the presence of God as a humble worshipper. Of course if he does not see the necessity of appearing before God thus, if his sins sit lightly upon him, if in fact the sense of sinfulness has never come home to him, then he can take things easily (so to speak); he need not trouble himself about that which is not in his judgment a serious matter; he can go on from day to day taking it for granted that all is well, that it is foolish to distress himself much about religious matters, that doubtless he will fare as well as his neighbours. But if a man is awakened up out of this condition of religious sleep, or if by God's grace he has never fallen into it, and the reality of his position in the sight of God as a sinner is thoroughly felt by him, and he knows the awfulness of God's presence, and the essential purity of God's character, and his own unworthiness of communion with God, and the absolute necessity of such communion to him if he is to live for evermore, then the question must occur to him as of all others the question to which he needs an answer—"Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high

God?"—how shall I come into His presence? how shall I ensure my acceptance? how shall I guard against the unspeakable misery of being sent empty away?

Now this being so, you will easily perceive that a passage such as that which I have taken for a text may be very useful for us to consider. Here we have the question asked, and the answer given: and although the question and the answer both belong to a time long since gone by, and to a covenant which has now waxed old and vanished away and which has been replaced by a new and better covenant, having in it more grace and better promises, still it can hardly be that we should study the answer given to such a question in the time of old, without gaining some lessons which are independent of time, and are as good now as they were when Micah the prophet wrote. In order however to gain the right point of view for considering the passage, let me take you for a moment to the beginning of the chapter. You will observe that the chapter commences with a controversy between God and His chosen people Israel. God calls upon them much as He did by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord;" and the burden of the reasoning is very much like what we meet with both in Isaiah and also in almost

all the prophets. It comes to this: the people are reminded of God's covenant, reminded of all that God has done for them, how He first chose them for Himself, then led them out of Egypt by the hand of Moses, then established them in the promised land; the ground of all, you will perceive, is the original mercy and grace of God. He does not summon men to do something in order that they may be His, but He makes them His and then summons them to act accordingly: and so here God by the mouth of the prophet bids the people think upon all His mercies towards them, and then leaves it to them (as it were) to draw the conclusion, and to say in their hearts, "God hath done all this for us; what ought we to do for Him?"

The first five verses of the chapter contain an appeal of this kind; and between the fifth and sixth verses I fancy to myself a pause, as though the prophet would see what would be the result of his appeal. Is there no one who can be touched? are all the people gone away backward? is there not a single heart which feels the mercy and grace of God, and the misery of having revolted from Him? At length there is a reply: there is a man found who has felt the force of God's message, and he perhaps stands as the representative of many more. It is hard to say how many penitent

hearts there may be, of whom the world knows nothing, and whom God's prophet does not know either; even as there were thousands in Israel at a time when Elijah thought that there was not one. However, the prophet represents a man coming forward in the true spirit of a penitent, and asking, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?" here I am, willing to be taught; do *thou*, O prophet of the Lord, teach me what I must do.

Now here we come to the most striking feature in the passage. If any one, who was acquainted with the system of Jewish ceremonial law, were to hear this question of the penitent Israelite, he might be disposed to say: Why need you ask such a question? surely all proper provision has been made for your needs. Wherewith shall you come before the Lord? why surely as Moses appointed you; there is a priesthood, and there are sacrifices and means of atonement and all the ordinances of the law: this is the way in which you are to come, it is God's appointed way, do not doubt its efficacy, do not mistrust Him; it is not ignorance but rebellion which leads you to ask, in the midst of such means of grace as you are blessed withal, "Wherewith shall I come before God?" Yet it would seem that if you had spoken thus to the penitent, you would somehow have failed to con-

vince him: he enumerates these very means of grace, which you would enumerate to him; he says, "Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" You will perceive that the penitent knows all that can be told him about sacrifices, and goes even beyond the law when he speaks of giving not only animals for burnt offerings, but even his firstborn child; he knows all this, and yet he feels that it does not meet his case; he feels that there must be some other means of bringing his soul into union with God and purging his conscience from sin, besides all that could conceivably be effected by sacrifice and the shedding of blood.

I do not suppose that the penitent in thus speaking intended to speak lightly of the ordinances of the law. I think that certainly the prophet Micah did not so regard the words; otherwise he would not have put them in the penitent's mouth, or would have done so only for the purpose of reproving them. Instead of this, he gives an answer concerning plain practical duty, which probably was the very answer which the penitent required: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what

is good ; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" By these words the prophet could not intend, any more than by the penitent's question, to make light of the ordinances of God ; but he did admit the penitent to be right in supposing that the ordinances in themselves were no medicine for sin ; in supposing that he who repented must bring forth fruits meet for repentance, must do such works of holiness as his conscience told him that God would have him to do, and that then he might come with his offering. Sacrifice must be no substitute for action ; a man could not more thoroughly shew his misapprehension of God's service, and more completely stand in the way of his own salvation, than by making sacrifices, how great and costly soever, the main feature of his penitence, and the substitute for doing justice and loving mercy and walking humbly with God.

The penitent's heart, therefore, told him the truth after all. However he might seem to be flying in the face of God's ordinances, by not relying upon them as the only means of bringing his penitence to a good result, he did in reality shew his spiritual discernment, and did also put honour upon God's ordinances by allowing his heart to express its conviction that the ordinances

must not stand alone. He put honour upon God's ordinances, by not allowing himself to regard them as mechanical means (so to speak) of grace and satisfaction, available for bringing peace to his conscience without any earnest spiritual combat and practical holiness upon his part. And if this be a right interpretation to put upon the text, then I think that we may find in it an useful application to our own case, and may easily transfer the teaching from the old covenant to the new, and may make the lesson given to the Jewish penitent useful to Christian people, who are earnestly considering with themselves their own position with respect to Almighty God.

In endeavouring to do this, I would observe first of all and in general, that the language adopted by the prophet in the text may very well be taken up by God's prophets in all times, and pleaded by them in their own defense, if they think it necessary to bring at any time very prominently forward the practical side of religion; that is, if leaving for a time the more mysterious regions of the faith and the more difficult doctrines of the Christian religion, they bring all their force to bear upon plain questions of conduct and matters of simple every-day practice. A prophet of God who does this is liable to be accused of preaching the doctrine of works, of being unspiritual or legal

in his teaching. Well—I do not deny that the Church of England has witnessed much unspiritual teaching, and that it is fatal to the life of both minister and people, if the high and peculiar doctrines of the Gospel be hid in a corner, and the teaching of Christ reduced to a mere teaching of moral duties: at the same time it is quite as evil a thing that Christian teaching should be unpractical, that doctrine should be divorced from duty, and the ordinary work of the week banished from the pulpit exhortations of the Sunday. Indeed a man may well examine himself, before he makes a charge of this kind against a Christian minister. Is it not possible that it may be unpleasant to hear of duty, because it is unpleasant to perform it? may not a view of the Gospel be sometimes charged as imperfect, because it does in fact bring out more fully than is pleasant to us a side of the Gospel, which is not much to our fancy? Certainly the answer given by Micah in the text to a man, who wished to know what he must do to be saved, may suggest to us that a prophet of God may put forward very strongly the practical side of religion, without being open to the charge of false teaching. Here was a prophet of the Lord living in the midst of a most complete system of religious ordinances, sin offerings, trespass-offerings, burnt-offerings, heave-offerings, with

priests appointed to approach God on behalf of His people and to make atonement for their sins; and yet he did not scruple to say, when need was, that God had required nothing more from those who would approach Him acceptably, than that they should do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with Him—the practical side of religion (you will perceive) put forward, as though it were the one great thing upon which men's minds ought to rest.

So much then for the general view which the text suggests to us of true Christian teaching in our days. Now let me further observe, that all teaching must of necessity fall short of the truth, and so become in reality false teaching, unless it involves a very earnest enforcement of practical piety—"to do justice, to love mercy, to walk humbly with God," to practise, in fact, all those habits of mind and of life, which we admire when we see them in others, and which shewed themselves forth so brightly in the example of our Lord Jesus Christ. I will illustrate this observation by two examples. I will bring before you two cases distinct from each other, in both of which you will perceive that it is necessary to lay great stress upon practical duty, in order to prevent important truth from degenerating into what is virtually untrue.

1. A man says in these days, as the penitent said in the text, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the most high God?" You may reply to him, "There is no difficulty in giving an answer to your question in these days: there might have been a difficulty in the time of the Law, but there is none under the Gospel. Jesus Christ has come to save sinners; you have but to believe in Him, and you will be saved, as surely as God is true." This you might call a full declaration of the Gospel to the poor penitent; and so in a certain sense it would be. It would be quite right that the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ should be made known to the man, and his own privileges as a member of Christ; but still it would manifestly be quite wrong to omit from this account of the Gospel a strong declaration of the need, that those who are risen with Christ should seek those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God. The doing justice, the loving mercy, the walking humbly with God, must not be omitted: and we need not complain, as we find that Micah did not complain, if the penitent heart requires a practical view of its relation to God, for which no declaration of God's mercy can be an entire substitute. A man who holds aright the doctrine of human redemption, who knows the meaning of the love of God to

men in Jesus Christ, will feel it impossible to do otherwise than offer himself up as a sacrifice to Him who redeemed him; but it is manifest that the declaration of the need of that sacrifice must ever form part of true Christian teaching. And it is remarkable, how in the New Testament the doctrine of human redemption scarcely ever appears, except in conjunction with teaching concerning practical holiness, which is based upon the doctrine.

2. Again, as the doctrine of the free pardon of sins through Jesus Christ our Lord may be deprived of its vital truth by being separated from the doctrine of works of holiness, works meet for repentance, works of humility, works of justice and mercy; so also may we place the ordinances of Christ's Church in a wrong light, if we separate them also from the practical life of piety. Take for example the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. Who can speak too highly of it as a means of grace? If it be Christ's own sacrament, His institution, His appointment, it would seem to argue want of faith in Him and in His ever-present grace and power, if we should in any way limit the benefits to be derived by the souls of devout communicants from their participation in the holy feast of Christ. Hence we can understand the strong language, in which holy men have spoken of this

most blessed sacrament: they have thought that their language could scarcely be exaggerated; they have regarded the warmth with which they spoke of the healing virtues of Christ's sacrament as a measure of the warmth of their feeling towards Christ Himself. Yet here also we perceive the need of bringing clearly into view the practical part of the Christian life. It is manifestly an abuse of Christ's ordinances to put them in the place of holiness, and so flagrant an abuse, that I will not venture to think it necessary to expose it; but I wish to observe that the most earnest worshippers cannot gain the full benefit from sacramental ordinances, unless those ordinances be held in close connection with every-day Christian practice; a man must do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with His God, in order that, when he comes before the Lord and bows himself in the presence of the most High God in the worship of the Holy Sacrament, he may receive the full benefit which God designs for him. This most solemn worship, and the most common every-day practice, must be held in strict conjunction. God hath joined them together, no man may put them asunder. And I fully believe that when the ordinances of Christ's Church are found barren and ineffectual, it is in the omission of common duties, and the separation of religion from common

things, that the explanation of the failure is to be found.

Therefore, Christian Brethren, I would desire to take up the words of the text, and say to every Christian man, or woman, or child, who wishes to know how to approach God acceptably, "What hath the Lord required of *thee*, but to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God?" I know that this direction does not include the whole of religion,—the prophet Micah must have known this too; but still it is a direction which may be in no wise omitted, and attention to which is necessary to ensure the soul against shipwreck concerning the faith. If you say that it is impossible to do any good works without God's grace preventing you, I know this well; but then this is not more true now than it was when Micah wrote. Besides, we are able to assure you of God's grace; God has promised this, and pledged Himself to perform it. He has taken you to be His own children, given you admission into His own family, made you heirs of Heaven and joint-heirs with Christ. Then there is no excuse on the ground of incapability. You have the power; we *all* have the power; Christ has said to us all, Rise and walk; it is we who must make the effort to rise and exert our limbs, in order that God may give them strength. Ah,

Christian Brethren, how slow of heart we are in drawing nigh to God! how easily contented we are with the poor miserable enjoyment of this world, which must pass away! how little do we think of the horrible nature of sin, and of the infinite mercy of God which would rescue us from it! Yet the way is plain, and in a certain sense easy: they who make the effort to come before God are quite certain to succeed; and they who fail will fail, not because God would not help them, but because they would not help themselves. Christ hath died for us; the Holy Ghost hath been sent down upon us; it remains only that we, on our part, should rise from the dead, and walk before God in newness of life.

SERMON XIII.

CATCHING MEN.

S. LUKE v. 10.

And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

I PROPOSE to say something to you, Christian Brethren, concerning the manner in which S. Peter was induced to leave all things that he had, and to follow Christ; or rather concerning those remarkable words of our Lord, in which S. Peter received the promise, that when he had left his boat and his nets he should be privileged to “catch men.”

Now our blessed Lord taught Peter the character of the office to which He was calling him in a very striking manner. He worked a miracle, which was at the same time a parable; He performed a work, the main purpose and end of which appears to have been the instruction of Peter and his companions concerning the duties which He was about to lay upon them. The Lord had been

sitting in S. Peter's boat, teaching the people on the shore, as He seems not unfrequently to have done; and when He had finished His sermon, instead of allowing Peter to land Him upon the shore again, He begged of him to go further out into the lake, to launch out into the deep and to let down his nets. I think that this request was probably intended, and might have been regarded as very likely, to suggest to the mind of S. Peter that the Lord was going to teach him something which it concerned him to know: it was not probable that Jesus would invite him to fish merely for fishing's sake; it might be deemed almost certain that there was some spiritual purpose behind. But S. Peter took the Lord's words in their plain literal meaning, and represented that in his opinion it was of little use to launch into the deep; they had been hard at work all night, and had taken nothing; and I suppose that the night was reckoned the favourable time for fishing; and if they had toiled in vain *then*, how much more *now*? Peter had however too great a reverence for the words of Christ to trust entirely in his own judgment; at Christ's command he will toil again, and again go out into the deep, and let down his net once more. Then was inclosed the great multitude of fishes, that *miraculous draught* as it is usually called, which filled the nets of the

fishermen and astonished their minds, and prepared them for deeper views of the character of Christ than any that they had yet received. Peter's astonishment was mixed with fear; he fell down at Jesus' knees, and besought Him to depart from one who felt himself a sinner. But Jesus would not depart; rather He designed to make the event which had occurred the occasion for drawing Peter and his companions more nearly to Himself; He bid him not to fear, and accompanied the command with a promise that henceforth he should be a fisher of men. The miraculous draught was intended to teach him how great was the office to which he was called, and how he must discharge its duties.

Now in order to give distinctness to what I have to say upon the words of the text, I will put before you in order three or four lessons, which the miraculous draught of fishes and its attendant circumstances seem calculated to teach S. Peter. Afterwards I will point out to you that they did not teach S. Peter only, but teach ourselves as well.

1. In the first place, the draught of fishes gave a special emphasis to the words, "From henceforth thou shalt catch men." These words might have been spoken to any person under any circumstances; but they would be specially forcible to

a fisherman, who knew the difficulties of his craft, and who could therefore make use of his knowledge for the purpose of illustrating and explaining the new course of life upon which he was called to enter. "Hitherto thou hast been a fisherman; thou hast found it a life of toil, not unfrequently a life of danger; thou hast laboured early and late, and thou knowest by experience how necessary it is to be sober and diligent and watchful. Well, from henceforth thou shalt *catch men*; it shall be a nobler prey which thou hast to seek, and surely it cannot require less earnestness and diligence and labour than the occupation which thou art now called upon to leave." I apprehend that S. Peter would (as it were) translate all that belonged to his old fisherman's life into that spiritual language, which would describe his life as a catcher of men; he would think upon all the precautions which he had found necessary to ensure success in his humble occupation, and would take them as hints of the precautions which it would be needful to adopt, in order to ensure success in that great work of Apostleship, to which Christ had been pleased to call him. Indeed I suppose that to the end of his life S. Peter and the rest of the Apostles could hardly have given a better account of themselves than by saying, We are "fishers of men,"—the world is the sea into

which we throw the Gospel net; we cast here and there and toil on in faith and patience, endeavouring to catch our brethren and to bring them into Christ's Church.

2. In the second place, there was a circumstance connected with the miracle that Peter had just witnessed, which was especially to be attended to in connection with his future ministry. The general life of a fisherman was no doubt toilsome and hard, but it was also upon the whole successful. Christ chose a moment in S. Peter's life, for the enforcing of the great lesson which He desired to teach, when the labour had been peculiarly unsuccessful; they had toiled all night, as you will remember, and had taken nothing, and it was after this night of fruitless effort that Christ joined the party and bid them once more cast out their nets. It was not therefore the general success of their occupation, that made Christ choose the life of fishermen as the type of the life of His Apostles; He would not represent the work to which He called Peter and James and John as an ordinary work, which they had only to go about as they would about any other work in order to ensure success; He rather took the fishermen at a moment when their human sagacity and skill had failed them, and when they had given up their endeavours for the time as useless, in

order to shew them that the mainspring of their success in their future work was to be, not confidence in their own skill and cunning, but faith in Himself. Peter had already shewed the faith in Christ, which was necessary in order to make it possible to enforce this lesson. Christ had said, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." Peter had represented the fruitlessness of their efforts during the night, but added, "nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net." When therefore the Lord used the words, "Henceforth thou shalt catch men," Peter would understand the condition upon which he should catch men—faith in Christ; a full persuasion that he could *not* catch men by his own craft, a full persuasion that he *could* catch them when he launched out at the command of Christ, and in obedience to *Him* cast his net into the deep waters of this world.

3. Moreover, the personal presence of Christ would very much strengthen this lesson. It was a striking feature of the miracle, that Christ was in the boat with Peter. When Peter launched out into the deep, he did not leave Jesus on the shore, but took Him with him in the boat. Of course the miracle might have been wrought in another way; Christ's word (as the centurion, who came for the healing of his daughter, perceived) was abund-

antly sufficient to perform all works of power; and on a subsequent occasion, when the Lord sent Peter fishing for the purpose of paying the tribute money, He sent him on his errand alone. Still it would be a great support to Peter's infant faith to find Christ with him; and the bodily presence of the Lord upon this occasion would illustrate and explain His spiritual presence with the apostles and the Church afterwards. For those were very emphatic words that Christ used before He ascended into Heaven, "Behold, I am with you always;" not, I can see you from a distance, I can look down upon you from heaven, I can think of you though far away, I can help you as efficiently as if I were indeed close by,—*not* this, but the promise of an actual presence, "Behold, I am with you." I have no doubt but that the Apostles would in after days interpret this parting promise of their Master, by reference to His personal presence in the days of His flesh. They would say, "When He was with us all seemed possible; there was no toiling all night and catching nothing, while He was in the boat; everything seemed to prosper and come to a good end which was undertaken at His command. Why should it be different now? is not His presence real? is He not with us still? will not His power be as effectually exerted now, as when He spoke to us with mortal lips?"

And though S. Peter might not at the time fully appreciate the value of the Lord's presence, still he would perceive that it was to himself as sailing in the same boat with Christ, to himself as representing Christ, as acting under His orders, as carrying out His plans, that the promise of catching men was made. Peter knew perfectly well to what presence the miraculous draught was due, and he could scarcely interpret the Lord's parable and teaching so clumsily as to imagine, that the same presence would *not* be necessary for the carrying on of his new and much more difficult work.

This leads me to make one further remark, namely, that the circumstances of the draught of fishes, which was made while Christ was in the boat, were such as to impress upon S. Peter's mind, that his success in catching men would depend upon the power of God. The draught of men, whom he should catch when he threw his nets into the world, would be emphatically a *miraculous* draught,—not miraculous only with respect to number, though this as well, but miraculous with respect to the power which should bring them into the nets. Peter could have not the least doubt as to who it was that had filled his nets when they became so full that they brake. It was not that he had gone to a new part of the

lake where the fish had been undisturbed ; it was not that he threw his net more skilfully than before ; it was not that there were more fish in the lake ; it was not that the day was more favourable for his craft ; it was plainly the influence of Christ, that is, in fact, the influence of God. The fish were God's creatures, and they obeyed His bidding : and though it would require a higher and more noble energy to influence the hearts of men, and make them obey the message of the Gospel, still it would be an energy from the same source ; it would be in virtue of an influence coming directly from God, moving the heart from within, that men would crowd into the Gospel net in spots, where without that influence fishers might toil all night long and yet catch nothing. Could there be a better illustration and proof of this than that which the great day of Pentecost supplied ? S. Peter himself was the fisherman upon that occasion ; Christ was present by the power of the Holy Ghost ; God worked on the hearts of men ; and what was the result ? Surely a miraculous draught ; three thousand men caught ; three thousand granted as the firstfruits of the universal Church of Christ.

In this way, then, I think that the words of our Lord to S. Peter, which we find in the text, would explain to him the nature of his work. I do not suppose that he would understand them

completely at the time; I am quite sure that he would not; but I wish you to see how, as he meditated in after days, the light would gradually shine upon him more and more. I would have you to perceive how great was the wisdom of our Lord in adopting a mode of teaching, which did not at once exhaust itself, but which would ever admit of new applications as new exigencies should arise. Still more I would have you to perceive how valuable the teaching is for ourselves; how thoroughly it suits our wants as well as S. Peter's; and how important it is for us to bear in mind that Christ says to some of us (perhaps in some sense to *all* of us) in these days, "Thou shalt catch men,—that shall be thy occupation; *men* shall be thy glorious prize; thou shalt launch out into the deep, and I will be with thee; thou shalt cast out the nets at My command; thou shalt not toil in vain; men shall be thy prey; human spirits shall be inclosed in thy net, and saved by thee from the wrath to come."

And this leads me from S. Peter to ourselves. The text, like other portions of Holy Scripture, is written for *our* instruction; the words were *spoken* for the sake of S. Peter, they were *written* for the sake of us. If they had not been written down they would not have perished, so far as he was concerned to whom they were spoken; *he*

would have treasured them up in his heart, *he* would have carried them about as the diploma of his Apostolical office, the support of his faith, the most precious memorial of his Master's promise; but they would have been lost for *us*. And conversely, the fact that they have been by God's providence preserved, may suggest to us how important it is that we should not be content with observing the value of the Lord's words to S. Peter, but should endeavour to prove their value by seeing how they apply to our own times.

In taking this view of the text, I would observe in the first place, that although there is a manifest resemblance between the circumstances of S. Peter and those of the ministers of Christ who have succeeded him as Apostles and Evangelists, yet there is, so far as we the ministers of Christ in this age and country are concerned, a very manifest difference, which ought not to be overlooked. When the Lord said to Peter and the rest of the Apostles, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught, and you shall catch men," the deep was the whole world of human beings, amongst whom at present the name of Christ had not been heard. There was the wide world before them, and they were to go into it and preach the Gospel, and make disciples of all nations. When we send mission-

aries into foreign countries, they are placed in much the same circumstances. Put a man in India, or in China, or in the south of Africa, and he will find himself situated, in most respects, like the Apostles in the beginning of Gospel times; that is to say, whatever the people to whom he is sent are worshipping and serving, they are not serving and are not professing to serve the Lord Jesus Christ and the Father as revealed through Him; no fish have as yet been caught in the waters; and so it was when S. Peter and his companions went out to cast their nets. But in this country we are very differently situated; in most of our English parishes, I suppose, there is no man, woman, or child, who does not know the Name of Christ and profess to honour it, however much there may be of emptiness in the profession of some. If we apply to the minister of an English parish the figure of "catching men," it is not out of the depths of ignorance that they are chiefly to be caught, but out of the quiet waters of indifference and the pools of sloth and worldliness. This is a very considerable distinction, and must affect the whole of a clergyman's ministrations. I always feel, and cannot but feel, that I have no right to address my parishioners as those who do not know God; I have no right to treat them as if they were not Christians; I have no new

name to declare to them, which they do not know already. I have rather to say to them, "You have been baptized into the Name of the Blessed Trinity: you have been made members of Christ, children of God, inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. I do not wish to deny this your position, or to reduce it to a fiction, or to make you doubt its reality; rather I wish you to believe it more earnestly; I wish to persuade you that the evils under which we groan arise from our forgetting our privileges, specially our sovereign privilege of adoption into the family of God."

But is there no real work to be done, a work which may be properly described under the figure of "catching men," because the inhabitants of a parish are all professedly servants of God and of His Christ? Surely there is always a work fundamentally the same as that entrusted to S. Peter, and the difficulties of which are sometimes increased instead of lessened by the professed allegiance of our people to the Lord. We have to stir up the careless, and to arouse the indifferent, and to warn the over-confident, and to check the spiritually proud; and in doing this we have as it were to preach Christ over again, to lay the foundation anew, to repair the ruin which sin the world and the devil have made in the temple of God, and so to perform a work needing all the

skill and zeal of man, and all the assistance of the Holy Spirit of God. We need the persuasion, which the Lord impressed upon S. Peter, that it is *His* work which we are doing; we need that inward support and confidence in the power of God, which will enable us to toil all night, even though we seem to take nothing, and then again at Christ's command to cast out our nets; we need the faith which will lead us to launch out into the deep; and we need that spiritual insight which will enable us to see Christ in the boat with us, which will assure us that we are not alone, that our work is under His eye, and that if done according to His will it will meet with His approval. Do we not also need still more that belief, which the Lord impressed by His miracle upon the mind of S. Peter, namely, that men's hearts are in God's hands, that the Holy Spirit can soften them and change them and mould them to His own gracious purposes, and that without this aid all efforts of ours must be vain? *Who* dare undertake the work, except with this belief? *Who* would not shrink from all ministerial work in despair, if he did not believe that unseen in the depths there is a power of regeneration and holiness at work, stronger than all the powers of the evil one, and able to bring home to Christ those who have wandered and gone astray?

Lastly, Christian Brethren, let me remind you that these lessons and hopes and assurances, upon which I have represented the ministers of Christ as depending, are also available for all persons, however situated, who are desirous of doing Christ's work in the world. Every man who has the love of Christ in his heart, and who is sensible of the condition of misery from which he has been redeemed, and who is anxious to lead others from misery and to give them a share of his own blessings, is, in virtue of these and the like convictions, a "fisher of men." No sooner does a man consciously resign himself to the will of Christ, and say, "At Thy command I will do this, or do that," than Christ says to him, "Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men,"—aye, the holiness of a good man's life, the consistency of real Christian conduct, the simplicity of earnest faith, the beauty of humility and charity and self-denial, are amongst the best nets which are thrown into the muddy pools of the world for the catching and saving of men. Do not leave it to *us*, Christian Brethren; do not think that *you* may walk on the shores of Gennesaret, and that the ministers of Christ alone are to launch out into the deep; there is work enough for us all, and we have no occasion to be jealous one of another. And I am sure that as there is no one who is situated in

such a manner that he cannot be saved himself, so is there no one so situated, that he cannot (if he will obey Christ simply and humbly and heartily) be admitted into the fellowship of Peter and James and John, and like them be permitted to catch men.

SERMON XIV.

THE BLIND MAN AT THE POOL OF SILOAM.

S. JOHN, ix. 24, 25.

Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner. He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.

THE history of the blind man whom our Lord sent to wash in the pool of Siloam is of especial interest in more ways than one. Christ often gave the blind their sight, but there is, I think, no instance in which the conferring the boon has given rise to a story of such deep and permanent interest as that to which I refer. The history has an especial value, because it tells us of the manner in which the Jewish rulers examined into the reality of our Lord's miracles. It would seem from this instance that they were not content to take what was alleged concerning Jesus Christ on trust: they thought that they might possibly detect an imposture and

be able to expose it; and of course, if they could have done this, it would have been their best mode of action as opposers of the claims of Christ; and if there *were* imposture, it could scarcely be hard to detect it when they were once put upon the track. So the Pharisees summoned the man who had been restored to sight, and examined him; and when they were not satisfied with the information they could gain from him they sent for his parents. They could not shake the evidence; the man said he was quite sure that he had been made to see; he could have no doubt of that, though he did not know much concerning his benefactor nor where he was to be found; and the parents said that they had no doubt of the man being their son and of his having been born blind, but they *could*, or rather they *would*, say no more.

The Pharisees were not convinced at first that a miracle had been performed. Whether they were so afterwards, I can hardly satisfy myself; it might seem from the words of the text, "Give God the praise, we know that this man is a sinner," that they believed the miracle, but wished to take away the praise of its performance from our Lord; yet I am not sure that these words were not rather the words of those who did not see how to deny, than of those who were convinced: had they been convinced it seems hard

to understand how they could have acted afterwards as they did. Again, men were very unlikely to be convinced, who had prejudged the whole case by agreeing beforehand to turn out of the synagogue, or (as we should say) to excommunicate, any one who avowed his belief in Christ. However, these are points which I do not wish to discuss; I am now only calling your attention to the value of the history as a formal investigation into the character of our Lord's miracles. It shews us distinctly that such investigations *did* take place; that our Lord's mighty works were not things reported by hearsay sometime after they were said to be done, but were examined at the time; what was done in the case of the blind man was probably done in other instances. And if we may take this history as a type of others, we may conclude two things: in the first place, that the Pharisees did look into the nature of our Lord's deeds; and in the second place, that when they had so looked they believed in Him not a whit the more.

In this way then I hold that the history of the blind man, of which I am speaking, is one of especial interest and value. But I have said that it is so in more ways than one; and the way in which I propose to consider it is of quite a different kind from that, to which I have already directed

attention. I look upon the history as of especial interest, because it gives us so completely the history of the spiritual progress of a man, who in the days of our Lord's flesh was privileged to be brought into very near connection with Him, and who was one of the first that was permitted to suffer for His sake. When the disciples asked their Master who had sinned that this man should be born blind, Christ replied, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." And it seems to me, that this manifestation of the works of God may be understood as going beyond that manifestation which took place when Christ gave the man his sight; that was the immediate fulfilment of the Lord's words, and for the disciples was a sufficient fulfilment; they would see in the restoration of that blind man to the blessing of sight a sufficient reason, why in the good providence of God he should have been born blind; but to us, who can read the history from beginning to end, there may be a further fulfilment of the Lord's words,—a *spiritual* fulfilment, of which the giving of sight was a shadow and a sign. And the manner, in which Christ made Himself known to the spirit of the blind man, and taught him to fall down and worship the Son of God, may be to us even more interesting and instructive than that

view of the history, which brings before our minds the mercy and power of Christ in giving the man his sight.

Observe, then, that the first movement of Christ towards this blind man is clearly one of free grace. It might have been of free grace, even if the blind man had entreated ever so earnestly that Christ would have mercy upon him; but as if to make the point more clear, there is not even so much as a prayer on the part of the blind man for the purpose of moving the Lord's compassion. Christ sees the man as He passes by,—apparently directly after the Jews had attempted to stone Him in the Temple for saying, "Before Abraham was, I am,"—and to see the man was to have compassion on him: the disciples ask a curious question concerning the reason of the man's blindness: but Christ gives them a higher view of the affliction than their question admitted, and at once sets Himself to work to do for the man what he most required—not to discuss *why* he was blind, but rather to give him sight. Thus I say that the first movement between Christ and the man was on the side of Christ, and arose entirely from His compassion: and so we find an instance of that which is at the root of all true divinity, namely, the love of God in seeking those who have no eyes to see Him, the coming of the

Son of Man, not to wait until the lost sheep come back of their own accord to seek Him, but Himself to seek and to save that which was lost.

The first step, then, towards the illumination of the blind man is on the part of Christ; and the second is the demand of an act of faith in return. Christ anoints the man's eyes with clay; but that does not give them sight. It might have done so, if Christ had willed that it should, as in many other instances, in which the sign of healing and the cooperating act of faith are made to take place together; the outward and visible sign and the inward and spiritual grace being (if I may so express myself) cemented into one sacrament by human faith. But in the present case the two parts of the sacramental act are separated; the outward sign of the clay is applied and seen to be inefficient, until faith has taken the man to the pool of Siloam, where, by the command of Christ, the blind man washes and remains blind no longer. The man might have refused to wash if he had thought fit, and justified himself, as Naaman did, by foolish reasons, drawn from his own fancy, as to what ought to be done: but the history with which we are engaged exhibits no such folly and wilfulness; it shews us how Christ's means of grace *ought* to be received, and the blessed effects of receiving them aright.

At this time the knowledge of Christ which the man had was very small. He had faith to do as he was bid, and of course this implied some knowledge; but he seems to have had no thought of attaching himself permanently to Christ as a disciple. When the neighbours inquire concerning the miracle, he tells them that "a man called Jesus" made clay and anointed his eyes and told him to wash in the pool of Siloam, and that he went and washed and gained his sight. Christ was to him only "a man called Jesus;" *that* was all the man knew; the neighbours thought that he would have known more, that he would have hunted up and down the land till he had found his benefactor; and so they asked naturally enough, "Where is He?" and all the answer they could get was, "I know not." I am not desiring to impute blame to the man, because I think we do not know enough of the case to do so fairly; I only wish to notice this feature in his case, which seems to illustrate the spiritual history of many besides himself, namely, that his knowledge of Christ was eminently *progressive*; that it began with an act of grace, even as baptism is granted to us freely without our asking for it, and that it was continued by an act of faith; but still that there was no very great knowledge of the character of the benefactor, no ardent desire to devote himself to that benefactor's service.

There was however in the man's heart the root of true spiritual life, and a little trouble and trial brought the plant above ground. The Pharisees tried to destroy such knowledge as the man had; and the attempt which they made to overturn his faith probably had the effect of making him turn the events which had happened over in his mind more carefully, and so made him to see more than he had seen before of the character of Him who had healed him. The Pharisees wish to depreciate the power and the grace of Christ; the man has received his sight—they cannot deny it; but the thought which they would impress upon the man's mind as the result of the whole proceeding is this, that the healer of his blindness is a sinner! This treatment seems to have roused the man's feelings; the malice of the suggestion was obvious, the absurdity such as even a poor creature blind from his birth could detect; and so he answered the wise men with a true practical wisdom which did not belong to them, telling them, in the words of the text, that whether Jesus were a sinner or no, he for his part knew not; but one thing he did know, namely, that whereas he *was* blind, *now* he was able to see. Observe how wisely he confines himself to the circle of his own experience. He will not enter into a discussion of the character of his healer, though I think it is clear from his tone

that he intended to imply that the charge of being a sinner, against one who went about doing good as Jesus did, came with a very bad grace from men like the Pharisees; but he wisely declines the discussion, and puts forward his own healing as a fact, concerning which *he* at least could have no doubt; he *knew* that he had been blind, he *knew* that he could now see; and whatever theory the Pharisees might have as to the manner of his cure, the cure itself was a fact, which no arguments could touch. Herein (as I remarked just now) we perceive sufficient evidence, that the true root of spiritual life was implanted in this man's soul. He who can take up the language of the text and say, "This I infallibly know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see"—who has within him the consciousness of having been led by God's grace to see things as once he saw them not, and to estimate things by a standard which once he applied not, and to think highly of what once seemed below his regard, and slightly of that which once seemed to have highest value—who has in fact learned to correct the judgment of his carnal nature by the standard which Christ has established—he has (I verily believe) the true root of Christian life in him; and though he may not yet (as the Apostle expresses it) have *apprehended* Christ in His fulness, he is yet on the right road to apprehend

Ilim. You may say that we have here the ground for any amount of fanaticism. So we have; and spiritual religion will ever be liable to be made a ground for fanaticism; it was the very accusation brought against S. Paul and his companions, that they were turning the world upside down and were mad themselves; nay even of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself we read, that at one period of His ministry His friends said of Him, "He is beside Himself." And I do not at all deny, rather I would urge as strongly as possible, that no one should depend upon feelings and fancies within, but rather should test his feelings by his deeds, and judge of the tree by its fruits. Still there is no occasion to abate the force of what I have already said, namely, that a man is on sure ground when he can say, "*I know* that Christ has opened my eyes;" he must not rest in this, he must not fancy that all has been done, because *this* has been done; but at least the foundation is laid, and such a foundation, so deep, so solid, so secure, that no assaults of men or devils shall be able to shake it.

But let us note the next step in the history before us. The Pharisees seem to have perceived the strength of the ground, upon which the man who had been blind had entrenched himself: they do not try to shake him from it, but lead the discussion away again to the manner in which

Christ had healed him. The man perceives their hypocrisy, and despises it; he grows bolder as he perceives the weakness of his judges; he will not let them confuse him by tempting him into a conflict about details, but asks, as though they were come to learn of him and not he of them, "Will ye also be His disciples?" And when they revile him for his boldness, and speak slightly of Christ as compared with Moses, he gives them a lesson in divinity, very solemn, very weighty, such as they ought not to have needed, and such as it must have much surprised them to hear. Observe the growth of the man's convictions; observe the increase of his courage; observe how the root of spiritual life grows, and fits him for the trying position in which he is placed! A poor man, blind from his birth, "born in sin," as the Pharisees would have it, with the mark of his corruption stamped upon him by Almighty God in the form of birth-blindness, a man who till a short time back had sat as a beggar at the gate of the Temple,—such a one as this to stand up before the Pharisees, and give them a lecture upon the proofs of Jesus Christ having come from God! What could the Pharisees do? they could not very easily answer the argument; they *could* excommunicate the man, and brand him as a heretic; and this they did. But it is evident that all the while

the man's mind had been coming into fuller light. When a person is once on the right track of knowledge, whether the knowledge be religious or scientific or what not, every opposition that he meets with, and which makes him review his conclusions, and examine further than he had before, and inquire into the grounds of his belief, does in reality tend to his progress: and so it was in this case. And although he knew not where Christ was gone, yet Christ knew where *he* was, knew what he had suffered for His Name's sake, and knew that his mind was ready for a further revelation of the truth. Jesus found the poor excommunicated man, and asked him the solemn question, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" What a strange contrast between these words and those which the man had last heard from the same lips, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam!" *Those* contained a simple command, which it would have been very wilful to have disobeyed; *these* contain the very depths of divinity, and take the man far beyond anything to which he has attained hitherto. Yet the contrast is not so great as it seems. The washing in the pool of Siloam was for this man the new birth of water and the Spirit, which fitted him to go on to perfection in the knowledge of divine mysteries; the blind man had learned by means of his healing, and had been convinced

still more clearly by his arguments with the Pharisees, that his healer must be of God, or He could do nothing; he needs only one step further, namely, to be permitted to see in Jesus not merely a man sent from God, but "*the Son of God*" Himself. To a person situated as this man was, excommunicated by the Church to which he belonged for asserting that which his conscience told him to be true, unable to abate a jot from the confession that he had made, and yet rendered by his confession an outcast from all the religious privileges of his country,—to a person so situated, the bare thought of a Son of God on whom he might believe must have been a thought of rest and peace. Jesus announced Himself as such; there was quite enough in what had occurred already to make good the assertion; faith seized with joy upon the announcement of the Son of God actually present in the flesh; "Lord, I believe," said the man to whom Christ gave sight, and he shewed his faith by worship.

Here then we perceive the completion of the work of God's grace in the case before us: we see the various stages, through which the mind passed, before the consummation of the whole in an act of hearty and loyal worship of Jesus as the Son of God. Now I do not at all mean to affirm, that precisely the same stages must be traceable in the

spiritual progress of every human soul. I think it to be one great mistake which many good and earnest people have made, that they have endeavoured to reduce the workings of God's Spirit to a system; that they have endeavoured to stereotype the experiences of their own souls, and publish them to their brethren as the only authorised version of God's dealings; I think that many men have been made into hypocrites, many frightened, many disgusted, and many puffed up with spiritual pride by this process,—hearts made sad whom God hath not made sad, and peace preached to those for whom there is no peace. But still there is such a thing as spiritual progress; the knowledge of Christ is a growing, an increasing knowledge; to those that have, and that improve what has been given to them, more will be given.

Hence I think that we may with advantage study a history, such as that which I have been bringing before you, in the character of a commentary upon the life of God in the soul of man. Every one need not expect to find a precise copy of his own history contained in it; but every one may hope to find in it some such general features of resemblance, as may instruct him and comfort him in his spiritual progress towards the full apprehension of Christ as the Son of God. And as the conclusion of the story suggests to us, that this

apprehension is the end of our calling,—that to know Christ as the Son of God is the Paradise of the human soul, the proper object of its desires, the true spring of its eternal life,—so the text may well suggest that which I have endeavoured to enforce, namely, that the firmest foundation for this knowledge is the conviction of having had our eyes opened. He who has been made sensible of his blindness by nature, and has had his eyes opened by God's grace, will by the same grace (if he resist it and quench it not) be led from strength to strength, until he is permitted to see Christ as He is, and to join the profession of his faith to that of angels and saints.

SERMON XV.

THE TWO WITNESSES TO CHRIST.

ST. JOHN XV. 26, 27.

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me. And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

It may possibly have sometimes struck you, that the Lord speaks in these verses of two distinct and very different witnesses to Himself. In the first place He says, that when the Comforter is come, whom He will send from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall *testify*, that is, *bear witness*, of Himself, that is, of Christ. In the second place, the Lord adds, addressing His disciples, *Ye also* shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning. Hence we have, as I said, in the text, a reference to two distinct witnesses; and the reference would perhaps have been more clear, if the same word *witness* had been used in the two

verses: the Comforter shall *bear witness*; ye also shall *bear witness*. There is no reason, so far as I know, for changing the expression; the word is the same in the original in the two verses, and might with advantage have been the same in the translation: for though undoubtedly *to testify* and *to bear witness* mean the same thing; still the effect of using one phrase in one place and the other phrase in the other, is perhaps to draw our attention away from the fact that the thing spoken of is the same. The emphasis is lost to the ear; and possibly many persons may read the passage, and be led to imagine that the word *testify* does mean something altogether, or at all events very considerably, different from the *bearing witness*, of which the second verse speaks.

I say that the emphasis of the Lord's words is lost to the ear: and you will, I think, perceive that the emphasis is in reality very important, and such as to warn us that beneath the surface of our Lord's words very important truth lies hid. The Holy Ghost, the Comforter, shall "bear witness of Me." Is not that enough? Need anything be added to a witness from Heaven? Does God need human cooperation? When the Holy Ghost bears witness, may not all other witnesses be silent? I suppose not; for otherwise our Lord would not have added in the same breath, "*Ye also shall bear witness.*"

So far from wishing to put the witness of the Spirit entirely by itself,—so far from being afraid of confounding that heavenly Witness with the witness of men,—so far from representing the Holy Ghost as superseding the efforts made by those instruments whom the Holy Ghost inspired, the Lord seems intent upon guarding against such a misunderstanding of the Mission of the Comforter, and upon asserting for the human efforts of the Apostles their proper and necessary place in the preaching of the Gospel and in the conversion of mankind. Since therefore our blessed Lord thought good in His wisdom to declare so clearly the need of these two distinct witnesses as fellow-workers in the great Gospel scheme, let us endeavour to enter as far as we may into the meaning of His declaration.

In the first place, let us for a moment look at the Lord's words a little more carefully: and in doing so I shall find it convenient to take the second verse of the text before the first; I mean, to speak of the witness of the Apostles before speaking of the witness of the Holy Ghost. Take the words of the second verse of the text by themselves, and nothing can well be more simple. The Lord speaks of the Apostles as being His witnesses, because they had been "with Him from the beginning;" in other words, they knew what

Christ had said and what He had done, and they were able therefore to report the same to the world. For instance, they had heard His parables; and therefore they were able to repeat them and to commit them to writing, and to cause them to be read in the Christian assemblies, and to say, "This was the style of teaching of our Master; it was with these dark and yet light-producing parables, that He was in the habit of teaching while He was yet with us." So again, they could report His miracles. They could say, "We were with Him continually, and we are quite sure we are not mistaken. It was not once or twice only that He laid His hand on sick folks and they recovered; it was His daily habit; it was the very mark of His Ministry; and the works that He performed were such as to leave no room for mistake. He made men see, who were known to have been born blind; He restored men to health, who had had infirmities for thirty or forty years; nay, He even raised the dead: especially there was one instance, in which a person whom we all knew familiarly was sick and died; this man sent to our Master and we went to him, but when we came we found he had been buried for three days: nevertheless, our Master ordered the grave to be opened, He called to the dead man, and the dead man recovered at once, and we associated with this same

man after his resurrection, and ate and drank in his company; and we are quite certain that there was, and could be, no mistake." So likewise concerning the more wonderful events, which at the time of the words of the text being spoken were still to come—the crucifixion, the resurrection, the ascension—the Apostles would be able to bear witness in the most satisfactory way possible, because they had been with the Lord from the beginning.

In fact, this is, as we know, precisely the light in which the Apostles regarded themselves. They were *witnesses*; their great work, in life or in death, was still to shout in the ears of an unbelieving world the good news that Jesus Christ had come, and that He had died and risen again. As long as they lived they had no other ambition than to tell their tale and persuade men to believe it; and if they died they considered that nothing could be more joyful and blessed and honourable than the *Martyr's* or *Witness's* crown. Hence the words of the Lord to His Apostles expressed exactly what we should have expected that He would say to them, and expressed also exactly what they afterwards did. But observe: would not any other great teacher, or *might* not any other great teacher, have said very much the same thing to his disciples when he was about to leave the world? Of course, no one else could have entrusted

such truths to his disciples, nor could any one else have had the same wonderful deeds recorded as having been done by him: but still, any one who has attempted to teach his fellows some great truths which he believes that he has discovered himself, and who has done battle nobly for the truth while his life has lasted, and has persuaded a few chosen friends of the importance of his doctrines, might very well, in the prospect of his own departure, commit the carrying on of his plans to his surviving friends in such language as that used by the Lord Himself. He might say, "You have been with me from the beginning, you know my views, you confess the value of them; when I am gone, do you bear witness of me, and propagate the great doctrines which I have endeavoured to teach men myself."

Hence, as I have said, nothing can be more simple than the words of the Lord in the second verse of the text when taken alone. But the Lord has *not* put them alone. On the other hand, He has put them in very striking connection with the words of the first verse. There is to be another witness besides the Apostles, and one differing from them in most essential particulars. This witness is called emphatically *the Spirit of Truth*; by which I suppose we may understand not merely the Spirit who speaks and loves truth, to whom

all hypocrisy and lies are an abomination, but the Spirit who spreads and propagates truth, who makes men love it, moves their hearts towards it, carries it into their minds, writes it upon their consciences. This Spirit of Truth was to "proceed from the Father," to be sent into the world by God Himself on a special mission; and that special mission was to testify of Christ. We may at once conclude from the fact of this Spirit of Truth being sent from the Father to testify of Christ, that His mission was absolutely necessary; that witness could not be borne to Christ to any good purpose without Him; that mankind would never come to a unanimous verdict, or anything like a unanimous verdict, concerning the character and the claims of Christ, unless this Witness were sent direct from Heaven to give evidence in the court of men's hearts. But how could this be? Had not the Apostles a plain tale to tell? could not men accept their testimony? would not their honesty, and oneness of purpose, and self-devotion, and untiring zeal suffice to persuade men that Jesus Christ had come into the world to save sinners? No, Christian Brethren: the witness of the Apostles, however clear and unimpeachable and earnest and self-denying, would *not* move the hearts of men, unless there were a concomitant witness given by the Holy Ghost.

They might plant and water, but they could give no increase; and they might sound the name of Christ from one end of the world to the other, but no one knew better than themselves that it was impossible to say that "Jesus Christ is Lord," except by the Holy Ghost. They had their own work to do, and it was a necessary work: if I may venture so to speak with reverence, the Witness which proceeded from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, could no more convert the world without them, than they could convert the world without Him. I mean that in the good providence of God this could not be. God required that human witnesses should be employed; He would entrust the evangelization of the world to certain whose mission it should be to teach their brethren; He would say to them, "Do *ye* work, do *ye* preach, do *ye* bear witness; and do so with faith and hope, because the Spirit of Truth will bear witness with you; the Spirit of Truth will make your recorded facts into a living Gospel; the Spirit of Truth will make the foolishness of preaching powerful to convert and save those who believe."

It appears to me then, Christian Brethren, that our blessed Lord did, in the words of the text, speak a very great truth, and not only a great truth, but one of very wide application and very general import. I understand Him to have taught

us, that in the work of preaching His Gospel to the world, and converting men from the power of Satan unto God, there are two agents who must labour together; and that therefore it is neither wise nor right to disparage the part which has to be performed by one, in comparison of that which has to be performed by the other. There is the human work, and the divine work; the witness of man without, the witness of the Spirit within; parents bear witness, teachers bear witness, preachers of the Gospel bear witness; and it is needful that they should; God will not work without them; it is His appointed way of bringing men to Himself. But the witness of such weak instruments as these does not stand alone. It is not by wisdom of words, by conclusive reasoning, by eloquent exposition of the truth, that we hope to reach the heart: we bear witness however with hope, because we believe in the existence of another witness within; we believe that God makes the weak things of this world to be strong, and that instruments which seem (God knows) inefficient through human infirmity become mighty enough to pull down the strongholds of Satan, through the power of the Spirit of Truth which proceeds from the Father.

Now let me illustrate this truth in several ways. In the first place, let me remind you how

thoroughly it was illustrated, and how many difficulties which might hang about it in the minds of the Apostles would be cleared away, by the day of Pentecost. On that day the multitude came together, and S. Peter preached to them. He preached to them, as of course we might have been sure that he would, concerning the life and death of Him who had been crucified. He spoke very plainly and simply on the subject, because he knew that plain and simple sermons are always the best. He did not tell the people much that was new, at least not new to many of them: he told them how that Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among them by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of them, as they themselves also knew, had been wickedly crucified and slain by themselves, though in accordance with the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God; he asserted that this Jesus of Nazareth had been raised from the dead, and that so God had declared Him to be both Lord and Christ. Thus S. Peter bore witness, because he had been with Jesus from the beginning. But, as I have said, there was not much that was new to many of his hearers: and one would have supposed that the answer to his sermon would have been, "Crucify him, crucify him;" or at all events, that the people would have resented

the charge of wickedly slaying Jesus, and have said that His resurrection was an invention of His disciples. But what *was* the answer to the sermon? It was this, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Was it the eloquence of S. Peter that had brought about so strange a result? no one would have repudiated the notion more earnestly than himself. The secret of the strange result was to be found in the coming of the Holy Ghost; there had been a sound from Heaven, like a mighty rushing wind; the cloven tongues of fire had been the symbol and pledge of the fulfilment of the Lord's promise; the Apostles were not alone now, they were not bearing witness unaided by any help within the hearts of those to whom they spoke; they preached Christ in the ear, and the Spirit of Truth took up the message and applied it to the heart, and gave it a miraculous power to convince and to convert.

I need hardly tell you that the day of Pentecost was only an example, upon a large and striking scale, of that which is to be noticed throughout the whole of the ministry of the Apostles. They ever bore witness to Christ, as though their message was too plain and too worthy of acceptance to be rejected; and yet they never concealed, either from themselves or from their hearers, the need of a witness distinct from themselves. And this re-

mark applies not merely to the witness which they bore to facts, but to every appeal which they made to the minds and consciences of those to whom they spoke. "I speak as unto wise men, judge ye what I say," may be taken as the motto of all Apostolic preaching; nay, it may be taken as the motto of the whole of Scripture; and it may be so taken because the Scripture is truth. Nothing is more apparent throughout Scripture, than that it appeals to men as God's reasoning and reasonable creatures; it makes no effort to frighten them out of the conclusions of their intellects by any gloomy threats; the wise man is in Scripture language the pious and holy man, the irreligious man is the fool. Reason and Scripture ever run parallel; and if sometimes they seem not to meet, it is because parallel lines do *not* meet, or at least because the point from which they will appear as actually one is infinitely above the earth, even in the throne of God. Perhaps this language may puzzle some of you; but what I wish to express is this, that when God calls upon men to *believe* this or that, or to *do* this or that, and whether He so calls upon them in the New Testament or in the Old, it is as reasonable creatures that He calls upon them: and it is as reasonable creatures, who would not open their eyes, that they will be condemned, if they resist the light. "This is the condemnation,"

said our blessed Lord, "that men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." And yet, should we be right in saying that religion was merely a matter for the reason or the judgment? Surely not. When we put the Scriptures in a person's hands, we do so with hope, because we believe that the Spirit of Truth has been sent from the Father to testify of Christ; we believe that the Spirit of God strives with the spirit of man, that it convinces the mind of sin and of righteousness and of judgment.

Were the words of the text then for the Apostles only? Do they belong to them and not to us? Did they point out the right course for them to pursue, and have they no advice for ourselves? I believe, Christian Brethren, that any one who thinks seriously concerning the spread of the Gospel in the world, or the growth of Christian knowledge in his own heart, will perceive that the secret of the whole matter is revealed in our Lord's words: and I think we shall perceive that it is in preserving the balance of the opposite truths, in the manner which our Lord's words suggest, that we shall avoid a dry formal kind of religion on the one hand, and an unreal, unsubstantial, enthusiastic kind of religion on the other. One man says, "If the Bible be true, it will approve itself to my intellect. I am willing to sift its evidences,

to examine it like any other book ; and if it will not stand this test, then away with it." Or a person prides himself upon taking what he calls plain common-sense views of things ; and the result of his plain common-sense views, as applied to the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ, is to deprive it of all that makes it stand as a faith by itself, and to put it on a level with other religions or with other codes of morality. Then another man says, "Evidences! don't talk to me of evidences! the only evidence is the light within: the Bible is *not* like any other book ; it is its own evidence, or rather the Holy Spirit within you will give you, if you be one of God's own people, such an assurance, as you cannot gain in any other way, or upon any other subject;" and a person who will say this will probably abjure plain common-sense views in religion as mere suggestions of the evil one. Now do you not perceive, in the light of our Lord's words in the text, how these persons are all right and all wrong? Doubtless it is impossible to come to a right knowledge of Jesus Christ in the same way that you come to a right knowledge of any other man. To "know Christ" is something different in kind from other knowledge ; though we may have "known Him after the flesh," yet as soon as we know Him as He ought to be known, from that moment we have to

testify that we “know Him after the flesh no more,” that “old things are passed away and all things become new;” and therefore to reduce Christian knowledge to the contracted region of what people call plain common-sense, is to mistake its character, and to think that the measures with which we measure the earth are adequate to find the height and length and breadth of that Heaven in which God Himself dwells. But on the other hand, what right has a man to disparage the means which God has given him for finding the truth? and what degree of error—fearful, dangerous error—is not possible, when once a man puts aside his reason and trusts only to an assurance within? Is not the history of much or nearly all of the errors, which have led Christians astray, to be found, in the fact that men have ventured to put asunder two things, which in the text, as in many other places, God has solemnly joined together?

I think, Christian Brethren, that you will find that this is so; and if so, my sermon may very well conclude with these two remarks. If you sincerely hold, as I trust you all do, the truth of our most holy faith, then never forget that the tenure upon which you hold your faith is something different in kind from that upon which you hold any other knowledge. We could have done very well without the coming of the Holy Ghost

had this not been so; do not despise the witness of Apostles, but do not forget to thank God that you have in your hearts the concomitant witness of the Holy Ghost. And if ever your faith should be shaken by any of the shocks which sometimes do shake faith while men are in this imperfect condition of existence, then look for your true comfort and support in the same twofold witness: see whether the witness of Apostles be not such as commends itself as honest and sound, and ask yourselves whether you cannot hear a still small voice in the innermost chamber of your conscience, bearing witness together with them, and approving itself to you as the voice of the Spirit of Truth. Whether strong in faith giving glory to God, or faint yet pursuing the object of our hope, depend upon it that in this present state of being we need those two witnesses to Christ, which He promised in the text that we should have. And depend upon it that God will make these witnesses to the truth of His blessed Son sufficient for all our needs, until we have passed away from this world, in which the best of us only see in a glass darkly, and have come to that glorious and eternal world, in which the very least of all the disciples of Christ is able to see his Master face to face.

SERMON XVI.

THE PHARISEES DERIDING CHRIST.

S. LUKE xvi. 14.

And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided Him.

You will perceive, if you look at the former part of this chapter, that the general tendency of it is to make light of money, or (perhaps I ought to say) to teach Christians to set money at its proper value. The greater portion of it is occupied with the parable of the Unjust Steward,—a difficult parable, and one which I will not endeavour to interpret completely, but upon the general design of which I will say a few words, for the purpose of illustrating the view which I propose in this sermon to take of the text.

Our Lord spoke a parable to His disciples concerning a steward, who had abused his stewardship, and who was dismissed from his master's service in consequence. Having received his dis-

missal, he casts about in his mind what he shall do: he sees want and wretchedness in the future; and the moment after resigning his office he sees no way of helping himself. Therefore he turns to good account the few moments left him. While still in possession of his master's keys and books and seals, he sends for those who owe his Master money. He determines to make these debtors, or tenants as they probably were, his friends; and accordingly he cheats his master to accomplish his purpose: he forgives them a large part of their accounts, returns them their rents as we should say, and hopes that by so doing he will have made himself friends who will help him in the day of adversity. It is unnecessary to say, that our blessed Lord does not hold up this unjust steward as an example to us in that he was unjust; but He does hold him up for our imitation in that he was farsighted and wise. The steward turned his opportunities to the best account; he saw the evil day coming, and he did not waste his time, but set to work vigorously to make preparations.

Thus our Lord would teach us to see, that we, placed as we are in this world for a few years of trial, with an eternity of life or death before us, ought to lose no time; that we should at once turn our opportunities to account, and consider the goods which we have in this world, not valuable chiefly

for their own sake, and as the means of procuring ease and luxury and sensual enjoyments, but valuable as they enable us to do work for eternity, valuable as they help us to make friends who will receive us into "a house not made with hands," when the "earthly house of this tabernacle" shall have been dissolved. "Make friends," says Christ, "by the mammon of unrighteousness;" turn to good account the mere wealth of this world; and, instead of allowing it to be a snare in your path, force it to become the means of adding to the crown of glory prepared for you in heaven.*

In this parable then, which is by no means free from difficulty, but the general scope of which seems to be what I have just now described, the Lord teaches us what is the right use to be made of worldly wealth, shews that it may be turned to good account, admonishes us that it ought to be pressed into the service of the Kingdom of Heaven. He then proceeds, with the same leading thought in mind, to give a general lesson concerning the love of money. He tells us in those words, which have been so often repeated and are so familiar to our ears, that "no man can serve two masters," and He draws the conclusion that no one can "serve God and mammon." No one can love God and love money; no one can devote himself

* See the remarkable Sermon of Augustus Hare on this parable.

to the service of God, whose heart is set upon the pleasures of this present world. I understand our Lord in these words to have asserted something more than that a man cannot serve two masters, when those two masters command things directly contradictory to each other: I think He would have us to perceive, that even if there be no direct contrariety, still the whole character and tone of mind necessary for serving God and for serving mammon are so different, that a man cannot succeed in both. A man may serve God and earn money, nay, he may in the very earning serve God: the early disciples earned money by fishing, S. Paul by making tents, and all men have their lawful callings, in which to earn their livelihood is to honour God. But let any man love money for its own sake, let him be (as we say) *fond* of money, and the temper of his mind is a totally earthly temper, it is such that God can have no pleasure in it. Mammon may be served, or God may be served; but the two cannot be served together.

This is the teaching of the earlier part of the chapter from which the text is taken: and I wish you to observe, for one or two reasons, that the teaching was addressed to the *disciples*. I do not suppose that the Lord was especially anxious that no others should catch His lessons, because

if so He would have taken care to address the disciples when by themselves, as He frequently did: and indeed others besides the disciples did actually hear the lesson. Still the parable of the Unjust Steward, and the reflections arising from it, certainly were addressed to the disciples especially. And I think that this is worthy of remark, if for no other reason, at least for this, that the original disciples of Christ would have been able, if any, to have dispensed with such teaching: they had little money to love, and little chance of having any. Still there might be the same love of the world, as if they had been rich. The poor may be worldly-minded, quite as much as the wealthy, and probably often are so. Anyhow there was Judas amongst the twelve; and to him it would certainly be a useful thing to think upon, that God and mammon could not be served together; that *he* could not be an honest man, while he robbed the bag. But our Lord might have had a deeper end in view than teaching or warning any of His actual followers. He might know that they would have (comparatively speaking) small temptation to serve mammon; but He might think upon the fact that their successors would have their worst temptations from this quarter; and therefore He might desire to put upon record, amongst the lessons specially addressed to His own followers, this

lesson, which it would be well if the Church had ever borne in mind, that love of money stifles the love of God, and that earnest piety is incompatible with worldliness.

However, be this as it may, there were certain persons besides the disciples, who heard our Lord's lessons concerning the love of mammon. The text tells us that "the Pharisees who were covetous heard all these things:" they were "fond of money," according to the meaning of the word which we translate covetous; their hearts were set upon this present world; high as their professions of piety were, the world had been too strong for them, and if it had failed to gain them in one way it had caught them in another. With the Sadducees this service of mammon would have been consistent enough; it was their tenet that there was no angel or spirit or resurrection of the dead; and persons who held such doctrine might well love this present world, and feel no inducement to make preparation for eternal habitations. With the Pharisees it was different; believing, as they professed to do, in a world to come, they ought to have used this world accordingly; but it seems they did not, and, as in the case of many amongst ourselves, their creed was orthodox and their practice was unworthy of it; their profession was good, but their actions gave their profession the lie.

These Pharisees then heard all that our Lord had said, and they perceived at once, that though not speaking to them, He had said something which applied to them very forcibly. If what He said did not touch them, if they had heard a lesson given to the disciples and did not feel themselves reached by it, they would have had merely to leave the lesson to itself. What was it to *them*? the lesson was addressed to the disciples, and if it did suit their case, they were welcome to it, and it was no concern of lookers-on or listeners. But the lesson manifestly *did* touch, or rather did *strike*, the Pharisees. S. Luke tells us that they were "covetous," fond of money; and therefore the plain assertion that money and God could not be served together would go home to their consciences; or at least it would produce that uneasy feeling, which prevents a man from taking no notice, as though he had heard nothing in which he had any personal concern.

Now then, Christian Brethren, I wish you to observe the kind of notice which the Pharisees took of the Lord's words. They did not lay them to heart, which would have been the best thing they could have done, making up their minds that they would mend their ways and be more consistent, and not allow mammon to rob them of Heaven. Neither did they endeavour to refute the

truth of what our Lord had said, which, if He had spoken falsely, it would probably have been no difficult thing to do; indeed if they took upon themselves to speak to the Lord, they were bound either to acknowledge the truth of what He had said, or else to give reasons for believing Him to have been wrong. But the Pharisees did neither one of these things nor the other; they took an easier, but much less creditable course; “they *derided* Him.” Mark, I beseech you, Christian Brethren, this conduct of the Pharisees, whose weak point had been touched by our Lord’s teaching; they adopted the fool’s course of mocking at that which they could not deny to be true, but whose truth they did not like to follow into its consequences, namely, into the practical result of a godly self-denying life.

It is this word *deride*, which I intend to single out from the rest of the text and to make the key-word of this discourse. I have been commenting upon the previous part of the chapter, in order to lead you to appreciate the conduct of the Pharisees when they had heard the Lord’s address. He had touched them upon a tender point, their covetousness, or love of money; but so far as we are concerned just now, it would have been nearly the same if it had been any other tender point, any other weakness. For whatever it had been, their

mode of argument would have been equally good, and equally bad; whatever sin He had rebuked, they might have *derided* Him—why not? If derision be a good answer to a preacher on the subject of worldliness, it is quite as good on the subject of hypocrisy, or malice, or backbiting, or sensuality; in fact, this is just the defect of this mode of dealing; being applicable equally to all subjects, it is shewn to be applicable to none. When a person *derides* another, who has spoken to him solemnly upon a solemn subject, the only conclusion to be drawn is, that the person addressed feels the rebuke touching him, and that, not having the courage to confess himself wrong, he hides himself from his own conscience by throwing ridicule upon his unpleasant monitor.

Concerning this mode of dealing with rebuke, then, I have two remarks to make.

1. In the first place I remark, that however foolish a mode it may seem, and however much people may feel ashamed of it when they see what it really is, yet it is very common, and (in the usual sense of the word) very natural. Persons sometimes use this expression *natural*, as though it were a valid excuse for doing this or doing that; and no doubt if an action be according to the true law of our nature, it is a right and lawful action; but then it is forgotten that human nature is fallen

nature, and that to call a thing natural frequently means merely this, that it is in accordance with the tastes and propensities of our fallen nature. Used in this way (as it frequently is) the epithet natural at once condemns an action as being bad. Thus it is *natural* when offended to take revenge; it is *natural* to see other persons' faults and not our own; it is *natural* to be selfish; it is *natural* to forget the things unseen and eternal. In this sense it is *natural* to turn into ridicule any exhortation or rebuke which has been felt to touch ourselves; and because it is natural, therefore it is also common. I think I need not take up your time by proving that it is common, because it is impossible not to have observed how frequently a laugh or a jest or a sneering remark is the only result of a remonstrance concerning some evil way, especially amongst the young. In illustration I would just refer to the Book of Proverbs, and ask you to observe how thoroughly it seems there taken for granted that mockery is the fool's argument: as for instance, where Solomon says, "Fools make a mock at sin,"—make a mock, that is, as I suppose, not merely at sin in itself, but at remonstrances concerning sin; mock when sin is brought home to them, put a laugh between the preacher and their conscience. So again, when we read of young persons who "mock at their

father and despise obeying their mother," we may suppose that the mockery is of the same kind,—not mockery for mocking's sake, but mockery in order to cover the conscience, to prevent the sin of disobedience to parents being seen in all its deformity. And once more, I would observe that in the same book a fearful light is thrown upon the subject of mockery, when wisdom is represented as eventually adopting the same course herself, mocking those who had once mocked at her, laughing at their trouble, shewing in an awful manner the folly of such conduct by a terrific kind of retaliation.*

2. The second remark which I have to make is, that this method of derision is not only foolish and empty, but is also positively mischievous. It is of course wrong, in the light of being an insult to those who do not deserve to be insulted: the Pharisees for example had no right to insult the Lord Jesus. And it is of course foolish conduct, because it can lead to no practical improvement. But I wish to press upon you, that it is also positively injurious to the whole spiritual being of those who give way to it. The Pharisees in the text, for example, were morally injured by their conduct towards the Lord; they were less fit than they were before to receive impressions for

* Prov. i. 24—31.

good; their covetousness was fixed more firmly, and all their other evil habits too. For this is the special characteristic of deriding what is good, that the whole moral sense suffers, the edge of the conscience is blunted; the man is less open to conviction than before, not only with regard to the particular subject which called forth his derision, but with regard to every subject. Indeed I do not think that I exaggerate when I say, that the surest method which Satan can adopt to ruin in the end a Christian's character, is to tempt him in the beginning to deride the persons from whom he hears solemn instruction and warning, or the books in which he reads the same.

Therefore I would desire to draw from the passing notice given us in the text concerning the conduct of certain Pharisees of our Lord's time a warning concerning our own. I would remind you, that while we are in this world God is dealing with us upon a system or plan; He is teaching us in a variety of ways directly and indirectly; He speaks to us directly by His Word, by the ordinances of His Church, by His ministers, by His providence; and besides all this, they who listen may often hear indirectly things not spoken to themselves, but which may nearly concern them, as the Pharisees in the text heard the lesson and parable addressed by the Lord to His disciples.

The point which is brought before us by the subject we have been discussing is the manner in which we should treat the lessons which God gives us. I can hardly suppose, that any one professing earnest belief in Christ would treat the lessons with direct derision,—though there is a temptation to do even this, and young persons especially are likely to fall into the temptation; but, putting this out of the question, the subject teaches us that so far from deriding the lessons given us, we must treat them with the deepest reverence, if we would desire to profit by them; whatever is spoken to the conscience is spoken by God,—it may be by the mouth of parents, or it may be by a Sunday-school teacher, or it may be by a minister in Church,—but however spoken it is God who speaks; and when God speaks man must listen, and must (as it were) take the shoes from off his feet and hear with reverence, and lay what he hears to heart. O how different would the result of sermons and other messages of God be, if persons treated them in such a spirit as this, and made it their prayer every evening, that God would bless to them whatever He had spoken to them throughout the day.

So much for the spirit in which the messages of God should be heard; now let me add a word as to the practical results, which ought to

flow from hearing the messages. It is of no use to hear, unless there be a thorough determination to obey. Those Pharisees who derided Christ ought rather to have considered that He had pointed out a great blot in their character, and to have determined to amend it: even if they had abstained from derision, they would have been very little the better, if they had not determined to repent and amend and bring forth works worthy of repentance. And this view of the matter it is especially necessary to bear in mind, because many persons may shrink from derision, who nevertheless do not (as our Lord said) "take heed how they hear;" there are many who hear messages of God of all kinds, and who, far from deriding, listen to them with apparent respect,—listen to sermons for example with approbation and critical approval, or talk about "our beautiful liturgy," and so forth,—and yet, for any good that they seem to get either from liturgy or sermon, they might to all appearance as well have been a hundred miles away. This always will be the case, unless there be a thorough determination to turn lessons into practice; to consider how what we hear bears upon our own conduct and habits, and modify the same accordingly; to act upon the principle, that whatever we are now, we may be something much better, and that whatever we have done hitherto, there

is plenty more of work still remaining to be done. Those persons of whom we read in the text did not do this; their derision of Christ went along with a self-satisfied hypocritical formality; they had no heart-religion, and therefore no real active piety. And *who* would wish to be like *them*? who would not desire to be as unlike as possible to those empty professors of religion, whom Christ upon all occasions held up to His disciples as a beacon for them to avoid?

SERMON XVII.

THE DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

S. MATTHEW xiv. 10, 11, 12.

And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel : and she brought it to her mother. And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.

I KNOW of few things more striking than the difference between the account of a death-bed as you find the story told in a modern book, and the account of the death of a holy man as you find it in Scripture. Those of you who are in the habit of reading books will have observed how much importance is given in modern times to death-bed scenes ; there is even a large book, of several large volumes, which is given up entirely to the history of the last hours of eminent Christian men and women. The reason why such books are written is, of course, that there are many persons who have a taste for reading stories of the kind ; and there is no wonder that many such

persons should be found. It is so interesting to know how persons, whom we have looked upon with great love and respect, conducted themselves in that solemn hour, which brings this world to a close and opens the gates of the other; it is so exciting to our thoughts and our feelings to follow our friends (as it were) to the very brink of the cold dark river, that runs between us and the promised land; it is so encouraging to find that the hope and the faith, which men have found sufficient to support them in the days of health and strength, have not failed in the hour of death and the prospect of judgment. In fact, the love of death-bed scenes—happy death-bed scenes, I mean—does so thoroughly belong to a large class of Christians, that probably to the end of time such stories will be told and listened to with deep interest and emotion.

I do not say that there is anything wrong in this: no doubt it is comforting to know that they who have trusted in Christ during life have found Him sufficient in death; no doubt the death of a Christian may tend to God's glory quite as truly as his life may; and no doubt also we may be led to very wrong conclusions by looking too much to death-beds. We may be tempted to forget that after all it is the life of a man and not his death that is given to God, and in which God

ought chiefly to be glorified. We may be led to take too cheering a view of a man's condition before God in some cases, and too desponding a view of his condition in others; the overwhelming excitement and interest of the present tremendous conflict may blind us to the fact, that after all it matters much how a man lives, and very little how he dies; the expressions of a confident hope from the lips of a man, who is passing through the dark valley, may be so cheering that they may be permitted perhaps to blind us to the fact, that a life spent in practical holiness and humble imitation of Christ is worth all the confident expressions of peace and joy, which were ever uttered by the lips of men and women, when on the point of leaving this world.

Doubtless there are all these dangers in thinking too much about the sayings and doings of a death-bed; and therefore that clergyman was justified, who, on hearing a friend begin to give a very particular account of a certain person's death, cut him short by exclaiming, "Tell me how he *lived*, not how he *died*." But my intention was not so much to speak against the value of what may be called death-bed experience, as to point out to you how free Holy Scripture is from anything of the kind: and I am led to this subject by the language of the text, in which is described the

death of S. John the Baptist. If you consider the manner of that death, as Scripture brings it before you, I cannot help thinking that at first sight it will seem to you rather disappointing. You find S. John the Baptist in the first instance producing a great effect by his life and preaching; all Jerusalem and the region round about went into the wilderness to hear him preach and to be baptized; there had not been so popular a preacher for generations. It was strange that he should be so popular; for he was a man of very strange and strict notions, quite the sort of person that is usually looked upon as "carrying things too far," and as not being overwise. His doctrine too was very hard and stern and practical; the revival that he tried to produce was a revival of quiet home duties, and such a revival is seldom very popular. However S. John certainly was a popular preacher for a time; there was an earnestness in his manner, and a strength of character to back his sermons, and a holiness of life, which it was hard to resist; and so "for a season" (as our Lord said) the people rejoiced in his light and followed him as a great prophet. And what was the end of it all? Here comes the disappointment. The death of S. John the Baptist is, I think, as nearly as possible what we should have expected it not to be: he becomes a martyr.

but without any of the glories which sometimes light up a martyr's death; he is shut up by Herod in a castle; there he lingers on month by month, until at length a wicked woman asks for his head, and Herod sends an executioner to murder him in the prison.

Now I ask whether this is the kind of death which you would have expected for him, who was declared to be the greatest among those born of women up to the time of Christ? I ask whether, according to human notions, this is the way in which you would have expected that the voice of him who cried in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight," would have been stifled and silenced? I ask whether there is not a temptation to think the departure of S. John from this world less glorious and less interesting than his entrance into it? And why do I ask these questions? because I am quite persuaded, that the study of the passage which I have taken for a text will teach you that S. John's death, as his birth and his life, was ordered aright by God's good providence; and that there is no reason for wishing the history of that death to be in any way different from that which we find it to be.

For observe this, Christian Brethren, as regards S. John the Baptist at the time to which the text

refers, namely, that at that time he had *finished his work*; probably few men could say so clearly and without doubt that they have finished their work as S. John the Baptist could. Most men who have laboured for Christ would probably be inclined to say, in the prospect of leaving this world, "I have endeavoured to do something for my Master, but I feel that there is much more to be done; all that I have done seems to me now a trifle; if I had another life to live, I could easily employ it all." From the nature of the case, because the work of Christ in the world is inexhaustible, most earnest servants of Christ would probably express themselves thus; and for ought I know, S. John the Baptist might have had thoughts of the kind running through *his* head; but if he had, it would be because he did not thoroughly understand the relation, in which it had pleased God to place him to the Kingdom and Gospel of Christ. If he had thoroughly understood this, he would have said, when he found himself immured in Herod's castle, "This can do no harm; I have finished my work." For the work of S. John the Baptist was not to preach the Gospel, but to point to, and prepare the way for, Him who did preach it; he was not the Christ, but only the messenger who went before Him; and if Christ were now come, what more need of S. John? if

the Lord were present, what need of a voice to cry before Him and to prepare His way in the wilderness?

You may say perhaps that it was but a poor reward for S. John the Baptist, that after he had laboured earnestly as the messenger of Christ, he should be shut up in prison and allowed to drag on a weary existence there, and at last lose his life to please Herodias. This is perfectly true, if you look at the matter from a merely human point of view. If you look at the matter thus, there is no set of men who have met with smaller reward, than the noble army of martyrs who now stand before God's throne and praise Him for evermore; "if in this life only we have hope," said S. Paul on one occasion, when the pressure of calamity seemed to urge him beyond his wont, "if in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable;" he meant, I conceive, that, judging by a merely human standard, nothing could be more painfully disappointing than to work hard for the kingdom of God and meet with only persecution and death as a reward. But then what is it that God would teach us by the whole of the New Testament history, and by all His dealings with us,—what but *this*, that we are *not* to take a merely human view of His dealings, and are *not* to suppose that His purposes have failed

because His servants have lost their lives: the question is, not whether a man thinks it time to leave this world, but whether he has done God's work in it; the great thing to which God would direct our attention is, not our own pleasure, but His great purposes; the lesson that He would teach us is, that we should give to Him the prime of our faculties, and consecrate to His service our health and strength, and then leave it to Him, without a murmur or a sigh, to determine, as seems best to Him, how we shall leave this world when our work is done. The first Elijah went up to heaven in a chariot of fire; the second Elijah was slain by the sword, and his disciples took the body and laid it in a tomb. Very different ends! And yet who shall say that one was better than the other, or that God did not ordain both?

Well then, Christian Brethren, let us conclude that when S. John the Baptist had done God's work upon earth, God took him to Himself. And, this being so, let me ask you for one moment to consider in what way it was that S. John did God's work; I do not mean what the particular work was, but rather what was the spirit with which he set himself to perform it. I would desire, in the case of S. John the Baptist as in the case of other New Testament saints, that you should not put him from you as a person so peculiarly situated

that you can find nothing in him that you can imitate, but that you should rather seize upon those broad features of character and those grand principles of conduct which you *can* imitate, and which you are bound to imitate. S. John was the forerunner of Christ; so far you cannot be exactly like him; but in what spirit did he go before Christ? this is really the question of questions; and it is by answering this question, that we may perceive how S. John the Baptist and other such men may be examples to us, who live under very different circumstances and have very different duties to perform. I answer then that the spirit in which S. John the Baptist went before Christ was that of simple obedience, and bold determination to do God's will. It was no easy task that S. John had to do; he had to preach a lesson which people are very little disposed to learn, namely, the lesson of repentance; he had to rebuke sin, and to assure men that One was coming who would judge them, and would "separate the wheat from the chaff and burn the chaff with fire unquenchable." And so far as a large class of the people were concerned, this preaching of repentance involved him in no danger or difficulty, nay, it even made him popular, and the people flocked to hear him in crowds; but then he was compelled to carry his preaching of repentance into Herod's palace. Herod was living

in adultery ; this was one of his crimes, and S. John told him of it, told him that it was a crime, told him that it was unlawful for him to have his brother's wife. Now it is this part of S. John's conduct that shews us most truly his character ; it shews us that the hard self-denying life that he led in the wilderness was a type and picture of his conduct ; it shews us that he was a man who did not allow any worldly or personal consideration whatever to stand in the way of his duty to God ; he would as soon preach repentance in Herod's palace as he would in the wilderness ; as soon speak of righteousness temperance and judgment to come to a rich man in purple and fine linen, as he would to a Lazarus lying at the rich man's door ; as soon preach repentance when his sermon was likely to cost him his head, as he would when he was likely to be applauded as a preacher by thousands who hung upon his words.

You will perceive, Christian Brethren, in all this a principle of conduct, which applies to all stations of life, and not only to that station in which S. John was placed. He was by family a priest, and by special appointment a preacher : but a man may be all this, and yet he may not be what S. John was. That which marks him out as specially worthy of our admiration and observation is this, that he did his duty in that peculiar

and dangerous station of life, to which it had pleased God to call him, with all his mind and soul and strength. I say that this is what specially marks him out for our admiration and observation, because viewed thus he becomes at once an example to every man woman and child amongst ourselves. I tell you nothing more than what you know yourselves, when I say that each one of us has a place appointed to him by God. Each one is where he is, because God put him there. Each one has some work to do,—a work, I mean, not for himself only, but for his brethren too. Each man has to save his own soul alive, to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling, to make his own calling and election sure; but besides this, he has also to make his light so to shine that men may see his good works and glorify their Father in Heaven; he has in some way or another to preach the Gospel to the world; he has to do something for the advancement of God's kingdom and the destruction of the works of the devil. Every one is thus placed by God: it is our privilege and honour and glory as servants of Christ that this noble work is assigned to us. The Queen of England is not more distinctly and truly the minister of God for the advancement of His purposes, than every one of us who are assembled in this Church. Well, then, the question for us is,

how shall we conduct ourselves in the place in which God has put us? And here, I think, it is that S. John the Baptist comes to our aid with his example: he has taught us that we are to do our duty simply, boldly, and sincerely as in the fear of God; we are to act as believing that God's eye is upon us, that He knows our acts, our words, our thoughts; that we are His and not our own; that we have a great work to do for Him, and a short day in which to do it, and a long night before us in which no work can be done.

And, if S. John the Baptist is a light to lighten us in the path of Christian duty, if we can learn from him how to do God's work in the daytime of life humbly, earnestly, boldly, then we may also learn from his history, that, having laboured during the day, it matters little how God takes us to our rest in the evening. I mean that it matters little whether our last hours be hours of pain or hours of comfort, hours of extreme weakness or hours of comparative strength, hours of depression or hours of exulting joy. It is the living, the living, that must praise God. It is the sacrifice of a living body and soul, with all those glorious powers and attributes which God has given to man to make him the prince of creation and the most noble of his works,—it is *this* sacrifice with which God is well pleased, and which alone He cares to accept.

O it is a fearful thing, when men fancy that they may live as they please, and follow their own imaginations, and keep God out of their thoughts; and that then in the agony of death they may (as it is profanely called) make their peace with God, and perform in the weakness of sickness and in the few moments preceding death the labours which are fitting for health, and the work which should have occupied the life! Beware of such a delusion, dear Christian Brethren. Give to God the prime of your lives and the best of your powers and faculties. Think of Him as having called you to be His own, as having redeemed you from sin and death by the sacrifice of His own Son, and as having sent you into this world to glorify Him and to do His work. Act thus boldly and consistently, in the strength of the Holy Spirit; and then, when the evening comes, whether in cloud and storm, or with a gentle peaceful sunset, God will call you to Himself and be your portion for ever.

SERMON XVIII.

THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

(Good Friday.)

S. JOHN XIX. 25—27.

NOW there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He saith unto His mother, Woman, behold thy Son! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

THE death of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the Cross, Christian Brethren, has its divine and its human side. Neither of these ought to be neglected; neither of them *can* be neglected by those, who take anything like a full view of Christian truth. It was the Son of *God*, who prayed for His murderers because they did not know what they were doing, who promised the dying malefactor that he should be with Himself in Paradise, at whose death the heavens darkened and the veil of the Temple rent and the graves of saints

opened ; but it was equally the Son of *Man*, who was crucified in weakness, who committed His Mother to the care of the beloved disciple S. John, who gave utterance in the fever which burned up His human frame to the cry of thirst. God hath joined these two things together, and we should be very foolish if we attempted to put them asunder. I trust that none of us would desire to do so. I trust that we all feel, that it is upon the union of the divine and human in the Lord Jesus Christ that our hopes depend ; that it is this union which makes Him a perfect high priest, and in virtue of which that is true which is so well expressed by one of our Collects, that God hath made His Son Jesus Christ *both a sacrifice for sins and also an example of godly life.*

It may however be not useless for us to employ a few moments, upon a day like this, in considering the truth of which I have been speaking : though it is a familiar truth, it is not a trifling one, nor one which can be easily grasped, nor one of which we can assert that we see all its meaning and all its importance, merely because we can enunciate it in an orthodox form. Rather is it a truth, of which here we can at least have only an imperfect apprehension, which we can never *comprehend*, which will expand before our eyes more and more as we dwell more upon it and make it more and

more the ground of our conduct, and which will continue to receive new light even in the eternal world. I propose therefore to make, in the first place, a few remarks upon the divine side of our Lord's death, and then to say something upon its human side: and may God grant, that on neither the one side nor the other anything may be asserted concerning this deep and blessed mystery, which is not in accordance with divine truth!

Now the first thing that I would mention as differencing the death of the Lord Jesus Christ from all other deaths, and marking it as not being a merely human death, is this, that the death was *voluntary*. How difficult it is to realise to our minds what we mean when we say this! Death is to us the natural termination of life; it may be violent, or it may be sudden by some acute disease or by an accident, or it may be by long lingering sickness, or it may arise from our own folly and imprudence, or it may come by the slow decay of age; but whatever be the character of it, the thing itself is the same in its nature. Birth is one end of life, death is the other; and the event of death is the only one which we can venture to prophesy, without fear of mistake, as certain to happen to us all. But the death of Christ did not stand to His life in any such relation as this; death had no power in the nature of

things over Him; His birth and His death were alike under the influence of His own will; when He was born He said, "Lo I come to do Thy will, O God," and when He died He was able to say, "No man taketh My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." Do you not perceive, Christian Brethren, what an infinite difference there is between a death which could be spoken of thus, and a death which is merely the working out of the original word of God concerning man, "Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return"?

Again; the death of our Lord was different from that of other men, and manifested its divine character, in the fact that it was one to which no corruption belonged. S. Peter, speaking of the resurrection of Christ, and of its relation to the prophetic words of David, describes the flesh of our Lord as that which "did see no corruption;" and S. Paul speaking in the synagogue of Antioch uses nearly the same language;* both Apostles seem to speak of the flesh of our Lord as that, which, not only did not, but in virtue of the divine promise could not, see corruption. There was a divine life in the human body of Jesus Christ, over which death had no power; the triumph of the

* Acts ii. 31.

grave, such as it was, was short; it was like a summer night, when the west has not ceased to glow before the dawn is seen in the east. The short residence of Christ's body in the tomb proved more clearly than anything else could have done, that His words were true concerning His power to take up His life again; that it was not taken from Him; that it was a sacrifice made by Himself to the will of God; and that He could conquer the grave as He could conquer all other enemies of mankind.

These features of our Lord's death, and others like them, are however only parts of one great truth. We may speak of the Lord's death being voluntary, and being temporary, and the like, and so speaking we may be convinced, as the centurion was who watched the cross, that He who was crucified was the Son of God; but we see most of the truth, when we regard the death of Christ as being a sacrifice for the sins of the world, when we regard Christ as thereby doing away sin, as shedding from His most precious side water and blood for the washing away of human pollution. When we take this view of the death of Christ, we manifestly get into a deeper region of mystery than before. How the death of Christ should have had this effect I cannot find that Scripture has told us, nor do I profess myself able to fathom;

there are those who have endeavoured to explain this, who profess that they have explained it, but I cannot understand their explanations, and so far as I do understand them they seem to me to be either insufficient or else erroneous. I am content on such a point to remain ignorant. Indeed I should be very much surprised, if so wonderful an operation as that, which is expressed by the word Redemption or any equivalent word, could be explained to human minds and by human language. I am quite sure of the *fact*, because God has revealed it; I know nothing of the *manner* in which the fact has been produced, because God has not revealed it, and because perhaps to a mind like mine it is incapable of being revealed. Moreover, I think that much mischief may be done by attempting to explain what is probably inexplicable; and that many darts supposed to be aimed at the truth of God have in reality been aimed at, and may perchance have struck, the inventions of men. I know that there is danger in thus expressing myself; danger of being supposed to throw doubt upon the doctrine of redemption, by saying that the method and process of that redemption are incomprehensible; but I dare not shrink from this danger. God forbid that I should throw any doubt upon the reality of our redemption in Jesus Christ; and I believe that no

one, who knows the general tenor of my teaching, will assert that I have ever done so: but it is one thing to say that Jesus Christ our Lord suffered for sins “the just for the unjust;” it is another thing to say that we can understand by what divine process in the counsels of God it has come to pass, that the sufferings of Christ have been effective in bringing about that result, which we all acknowledge with thankful hearts that by the mercy of God they have produced.

But enough of this view of the subject. I was intending to press upon you, that the great proof of the difference between the death of Christ and any other death is to be found in its redemptive power. When the Scripture speaks of the blood of Christ cleansing from all sin, and of that blood having power to purge the conscience, which the blood of the Levitical sacrifices had not, we perceive at once that there is a divine character attributed to the Lord’s death; it was a death in which all mankind were concerned; its influence went forth upon all the nations and healed them all. Do not ask how, for you can never know; but rather look to the greatness of the act which Christ performed in emptying Himself of His glory and taking upon Him human flesh and suffering upon the cross, and then consider whether anything be

incredible, which the Scripture may affirm of such an unspeakable act of condescension.

Thus, therefore, regarding the death of Christ, we become sensible that it has its divine side. However wonderful it may seem, however hard for the human mind to grasp, yet we are compelled to acknowledge that He who hung upon the Cross of Calvary in the extremity of weakness may be called without blasphemy the Son of God,—may be called so, not merely by courtesy, as good men have sometimes been honoured with the title, but by essential and eternal right, and in all the fulness of meaning given to the words in the Nicene Creed. If this be so, we do well to contemplate the death of Christ thus, and dwell earnestly upon it; it is too great a truth to be heard with indifference; it ought to be a truth which lies at the foundation of our spiritual being, which supplies us with motives of conduct, which influences our thoughts all day long. And if it were to my purpose, I could employ all this sermon in enlarging upon and enforcing this view of the death of Christ; nay, I could preach an endless course of sermons on the subject, because it is a text dealing with the infinite, and running out into infinite lines of thought which it would require eternity to exhaust. But my present purpose is different. I began my sermon by saying that the

death of Christ has two sides, a human as well as a divine; now therefore it will be my business to treat for a few moments of the human side. My text is proof of this, if there were no other; He who could think of His mother as He hung in agony, *must* have had a human heart.

In looking upon the Lord's death, then, on its human side, let us first observe, that it was a *real* death, as real a death as that which we shall die ourselves. I do not know that this truth is likely to be gainsaid in our own days; but there have been times, when it has been doubted and denied. S. John speaks of men even in his days, who said that "Jesus Christ was *not come in the flesh*;" such men thought, or pretended to think, that the body of Christ was a mere phantom body, His life a mere phantom life, His death a mere phantom death; some said that the man Jesus died, that Christ did not die; some might perhaps think thus to honour the Lord, but in reality such views shewed that they who held them had never entered into the truth of the thorough union of God and man in Jesus Christ. One can hardly wonder that they should find a difficulty: when a person has once seized hold upon the truth, that Jesus Christ was that Word of God, of whom S. John says that He was in the beginning, and that He was with God and was God, and that by Him all

things were made; then indeed it is a great effort to say of that Incarnate Word, He died upon the cross. Possibly some persons are conscious of no such effort, because they have not earnestly considered what the real being of Christ is; possibly there may be much which is called orthodoxy, and which is in reality mere lazy repeating of the words of Creeds; but with this I am not just now concerned. I only desire to impress upon you, that the death of Christ was a true human death; that the body which hung upon the cross was one as sensible of pain as our own, that the nails pierced the hands and feet of a *man*, that it was a *man's* blood which followed the spear from the wounded side. It is quite as necessary for a full apprehension of the Passion to bear these truths in mind, as it is to remember the darkness which came upon the earth and the opening of the graves of the saints; it is the death of a *brother*, of one purer and better and fairer than ourselves no doubt, but still like ourselves except in sin, over which we have at once to grieve and rejoice upon this sad and joyful day.

And because the death of our Lord was a human death, therefore it was a death of suffering. I might say much upon the pains of the cross; it was a cruel lingering death; so cruel, that it was permitted, even in those iron days, to charitable

persons to supply wine and myrrh to deaden the nerves, and dull the senses of those who were about to suffer. Poets and painters and preachers have all made much of these sufferings, and I do not know that they have made too much; but it lies out of my path at present to enlarge upon them. It is not the *intensity* of the sufferings, but rather their *reality*, upon which I wish to lay stress. If they had been less than they were, I suppose the death of Christ would still have been a sacrifice for sins; and if they had been ten times greater, I suppose that the love of Christ would still have constrained Him to bear them. But putting the *intensity* of the sufferings out of the question, their *reality* is a thing which we must by no means put out of the question; they were the sufferings of a *man*, the sufferings of one weak according to the weakness of human flesh; the same sufferings, so far as the body is concerned, as those of the thieves crucified on either hand.

S. John has given us, in the verses following the text, an indication of the true human feelings of our Lord, which no one of the other three Evangelists has recorded. One effect of crucifixion was to produce an intolerable sense of thirst. Jesus was not the first to experience it; thousands of others had cried out in their agony, even as Jesus cried, "I thirst;" but Jesus *did*

experience this feeling, and the record of His experience is valuable, and probably was preserved by S. John, just because the feeling *was* common, and because the cry of the Lord proved that the fever of crucifixion worked in His most precious blood, as it did in that of the vilest criminal who ever died this death. Nor was the Lord ashamed to proclaim His thirst. His was not the heroism, that tramples upon feelings which God has implanted; and His words have probably often been a source of comfort, certainly they may be a source of comfort, to those, who in the agony of severe illness sometimes feel ashamed of their weakness, when they find that their bodily pains *will* gain utterance in words.

But S. John has given us,—and he alone of the four Evangelists,—a portion of history, which is still more valuable for my present purpose than that which records the Lord's confession of thirst. I know of nothing more touching in the whole Gospel history, than the story, which the text contains, of our Lord's care for His Mother. As He was hanging on the cross, He saw His Mother at the foot of it. What was to become of her when He was gone? Her husband, who had been her guardian during the childhood of Christ, had doubtless been long gone to his rest. She had no sons but one,—so at least tradition assures us,

—so our sense of reverence for the Lord bids us believe,—and so also Holy Scripture (though it does not positively assert as much) seems to encourage us to think; and that one Son was now taken from her and given to and for the world. The sword had now pierced her soul; she had been taught that high honour in God's kingdom is ever accompanied by great tribulation, and that in her case the privilege of being the Mother of Christ was likely to be purchased by a broken heart. Who is to be her guardian? There stood by the cross one who was fitted for the office; that disciple, who delights in calling himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and who appears to have been nearer to the Lord's human heart than any other man,—*he* stood by the cross, as well as the Mother of Jesus and the other women. The Lord commits His Mother to *him*. "Woman," He says to His Mother, "behold thy son!" S. John received the legacy at his Lord's hands; he took his new mother to his home; and when in his old age he set himself down to write his Gospel, he related this story of his Master's passion, as one which no Evangelist had related before, and which was very pertinent to the purpose of the Gospel. S. John desired to set forth the twofold being of Christ. In that wonderful preface to his Gospel he declares in oracular terms the truth of His divine cha-

racter; but he was quite as anxious, that Christians should know and believe that their Lord was very man. Were there any stories of His life more than others fitted to declare this great truth? The Holy Ghost would bring many to S. John's remembrance, and probably none would stand out before his mind in brighter colours than the legacy of the blessed Virgin to his care. He would remember the sadness with which they stood by the cross; how they watched the Lord, thinking that the end must be at hand; how they perceived Him at length make an effort to speak; and how with parched lips and faint voice He desired *him* to take charge of a mother, and *her* to adopt a son. If S. John desired, as he did, to put on record for all future generations, and with a clearness which no heretics should be able to evade, the genuine humanity of Christ, what could he do better than reveal this history? Who could doubt that it was a human heart and the heart of a son, which did not, in the hour of agony and of death, forget the Mother who was left behind?

Christian Brethren, S. John wrote what he did for our instruction; he, more distinctly than any other New Testament writer, brings out in clear outline the two sides of the truth, on the union of which the Catholic faith depends; and it is never more requisite to give full weight to both one side

and the other, than when we are contemplating that great event which we celebrate to-day. Do not be afraid to claim that crucified Man as your brother. Is it not a brother's voice? Is it not human blood? Does not the head sink upon the breast like the head of a human sufferer? Is not that cry of thirst one which moves your heart? Is not that His Mother at the foot of the cross; and is not that the disciple whom He loved? O, depend upon it, it is one of our own race; it is the seed of that woman who bore us all; it is the eldest Brother of the family to which we all belong. Yes—but this is only half the truth. This is He who worked miracles, who called God His Father, “making Himself equal with God;” who said that He laid down His life of His own accord, and had power to take it again. This is He whose word stilled the waves: this is He who said to Lazarus, “Come forth:” and lo, now that He hangs upon the cross, the sun is darkened, the veil of the Temple is rent, the graves cannot hold their dead. The centurion is right; “Truly this *is* the Son of God.” Therefore we must not merely grieve over Him and say, “Alas, my Brother;” but we must take another tone and say, “By Thy Cross and Passion, Good Lord, deliver us!”

SERMON XIX.

PRAYER TO SAINTS AND PURGATORY.

S. LUKE xvi. 23, 24.

And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

THE parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus is so striking and solemn, that it almost forces itself as it were upon our attention; and the scene of the parable is laid in a place so fearful and yet so full of interest to ourselves, that we feel constrained to dwell upon its circumstances more perhaps than in the case of some others. It seems to me, however, that we should make a great mistake, if we should lay too much stress upon the peep which the parable affords us into the condition of spirits departed. That veil, which Almighty God for wise purposes has suspended between ourselves and those who have been summoned from this life, our Lord never intended to

remove ; the general scope and end of the parable was that upon which the merciful speaker mainly desired to fix our minds, and that general scope and end it is not difficult for any attentive reader to discover. Christ would teach us the absolute and infinite need there is, that each one of us should in this world use to the best advantage those opportunities which God has given him ; He would teach us, that, whether rich or poor, whether fed on dainties or begging crumbs at the rich man's door, we have all our means of grace ; and that God will work no miracle to force the conscience of any man, who has obstinately closed his eyes. This I say is the general teaching of the parable, and a simple man can scarcely miss it. It is because it teaches in a most wonderful manner this all-important lesson, that I would point to the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus as one of the most instructive and striking specimens of our Blessed Lord's teaching.

Nevertheless there are two points of doctrine, upon which I think that we may regard the parable as throwing light, without straining its words to purposes for which they were not intended. Nothing can be more wrong in principle, in the case of this parable or in that of any other portion of Scripture, than to take incidental expressions, forming as it were only the furniture and ornaments of the

structure, and then to hang upon them deductions and conclusions which have no natural connection with the general teaching of the passage. It would be very easy to err in this respect in the treatment of the parable before us; but, having regard to this danger, I still think that there are two doctrines, concerning the truth of which we may gather from the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus at least some very useful hints, and perhaps something more.

1. The first doctrine to which I allude is that of prayers to saints. The practice of Invocation of Saints is, as you know, not recognised by the English Church; but it forms so large a portion of the ordinary worship of the Roman Church, a Church making the most active endeavours to spread its doctrines and principles amongst ourselves, that it seems to me not useless sometimes to call your attention with all charity to the differences betwixt us.

It might seem, then, at first sight that the parable contained an example of an invocation made to a saint; a prayer described by our Lord Himself, and that without censure, as having been offered up, not to God the Father, nor to Himself, but to Abraham, a saint in glory. Now I think that the remarks which I shall make will be sufficient to shew, that the prayer described in the

parable cannot be fairly taken as a warranty for the invocation of saints. You might perhaps feel disposed at once to throw yourself upon the general teaching of Scripture, and therefore refuse to hang so important a doctrine upon the interpretation of one particular passage,—and this I believe, in general, to be a sound and right principle; but still it would at least present rather a formidable difficulty to the mind of a simple earnest disciple of Christ, if any one portion of the Lord's teaching appeared to recognise a practice which the Church represented to him as dangerous and false. Therefore it will, I think, be satisfactory to our minds, if, upon closer examination, we find that the language of the parable does not really lend any support to a practice, which on other grounds we are led to condemn.

And first, I observe that the description of the resting-place of the blessed as "Abraham's bosom" is the adoption of a merely Jewish figure for the condition of the departed. To be taken to that place, in which Abraham the head and father of their race was, and to remain in his society, was to the mind of a pious Jew the fulfilment of all his soul's hopes; and the Lord not desiring, as I have already said to you, to raise the veil which hides the mysteries of the unseen world, adopted a description of the regions of the departed which

at once explained itself to those whom He addressed, inasmuch as they were Jews. This being so, it seems clear that we must be very cautious in drawing any conclusions from the sayings and doings of one, who is introduced into the parable and made to occupy a prominent position in it, not because Christian doctrine required it, but because the persons to whom the parable was spoken happened to be Jews. It would, I imagine, be fair and right, that we as Christians should object to any doctrine being established by reference to what we may call the Jewish accidents of a parable addressed in the first instance to Jews alone.

But setting aside this general ground of argument, it is important to observe, that even if we do look upon the prayer of the rich man to Abraham as an example of a prayer to a saint, still that prayer was *not answered*. Moreover the spirit of Abraham's reply is such as to suggest to us, that all other prayers would be equally useless. Abraham speaks, not as one who could help if he would, but rather as one who can only look on upon the inevitable fate of those who are merely brethren of himself. It would profit us little therefore to be able to shew that a wretched man, who had misspent his time and his money and so had brought himself to perdition, raised a prayer

in his agony to a saint in bliss, unless we could also shew a reasonable degree of probability that the saint had some power to grant the prayer if he would.

And not only does the parable afford us no ground of this kind, but quite otherwise; it points out (as it seems to me) the real ground of the immorality of all prayers addressed to any other except the Supreme God. For when the rich man makes his petition on behalf of his five brethren, praying Abraham that he will send Lazarus back again upon earth to warn them of their reckless living, Abraham, without saying whether he had or had not the power to grant the request, shews why it would be wrong that it should be granted. He shews that God was dealing with those five brethren as He deals with all His reasonable creatures; giving them certain advantages, certain teachers to be listened to, certain talents to be accounted for; that they were in fact in the hands of the Judge of all the earth, who would assuredly do right; and therefore that it would be useless for him to interfere in a matter, which was in God's own hands. This (as I have said) seems to point out the immorality of all prayers made to saints. For why are not the prayers made to God Himself? What need of any other mediator between God and man, besides Him, who being God graciously be-

came man that *He* might be the mediator? Do not such prayers imply either that men and women are more merciful than God, or that there is something in our prayer, which we are ashamed to lay open to God's allseeing eye, and which we would therefore seek to obtain by the aid of one weak as ourselves?

Thus the conduct of Abraham in the parable seems to me, so far from affording an example of a recognised prayer to a saint, to give the best refutation of the lawfulness of such prayers; shewing as it does that such prayers must either be unanswered and therefore vain, or else answered at the expense of interfering with the allwise government of a just and jealous God.

2. I pass on now to notice the second doctrine, with regard to which it seemed to me to be useful to examine the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. I have already said, that it was clearly not the intention of our Lord in the parable to give us any particular revelation concerning the state of spirits departed; and therefore, if all Christians had been content to leave that state in the mysterious concealment in which God has placed it, I should deem that they acted wisely, and that they would find nothing in this parable to tempt them to any curious prying into God's mysteries. Nevertheless, in matter of fact, all

Christians have not acted thus ; and a doctrine has been invented, which we know of as the doctrine of Purgatory, and which pretends to account for the condition of departed spirits before the final consummation of the bliss of those who die in the Lord. Now a doctrine of this kind might possibly be a piece of innocent speculation : it is very natural, almost irresistible, to let the fancy wander beyond the last struggle on earth, and picture to itself the condition of those who by such a struggle have passed home to their rest. And it is conceivable that a doctrine on this subject, though not expressly revealed, might yet have so much of the sanction of good and thoughtful men, as to give it general currency amongst Christians ; and if it were not imposed as an article of faith, it might possibly form an innocent, though not an infallible, doctrine. But the doctrine ceases to be innocent, so soon as it introduces the notion that sins committed in this life can be expiated or atoned for, when the sinner himself has departed and gone to give in the account of his stewardship. Now the doctrine, in this dangerous form, has gained currency in many parts of Christendom,—the doctrine (that is) that the condition of those departed can be amended by the prayers and worship of those who remain on earth ; and that this is not a true doctrine, may I think be clearly shewn from the parable before us.

I would first however make this remark, which to some of you perhaps may not be new ; namely, that, whether right or wrong, prayers for the departed were made in the Church from very early times. Whether the practice dates actually up to the age of the Apostles, it is not necessary for me to inquire ; but there is one feature of the practice, as carried on in primitive times, which it is quite essential to notice. The feature is, that those early prayers were not made with the view of blotting out unpardoned sins ; but that they were prayers on behalf of those, whose unrighteousness was already forgiven and whose sin was covered, and who therefore were at rest. Emphatically prayers for *departed saints*, not prayers for *unpardoned sinners* ; prayers, the character and spirit of which we can perhaps best understand by calling to mind that prayer in our own service for the Burial of the Dead, in which we beseech Almighty God “of His gracious goodness shortly to accomplish the number of His elect and to hasten His kingdom ; that we, with all those that are departed in the true faith of His holy Name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul.” Here we have a prayer for the departed in unmistakeable terms, but then it is no prayer for the change of that destiny which their lives on earth have already determined ; it is a prayer for

the speedy coming of that kingdom, which will of necessity be to them, as to all saints whether living or dead, the advent of immeasurable bliss. The petition of the Lord's prayer also, "Thy kingdom come," is one, in which of necessity the members of Christ departed are as much interested as we ourselves can be; and I apprehend that those prayers for the dead are lawful, which are the expansion of this petition of the Lord's prayer. In fact, a lawful prayer for the dead is but a memorial of departed saints; and to include them expressly in our prayers is but to recognise the truth, that saints departed and saints still in the flesh, saints triumphant and saints militant, do equally and together form the one Catholic Church of Christ.

Here, then, is the limit of prayers for those departed. I have said what I have, in order that you may remember that it is in reality no argument in favour of prayers for the dead, such as we find them when taken in connection with the doctrine of Purgatory, to say that prayers for the dead were in use with the primitive Church. But the parable before us seems to me to give such teaching upon the matter as to set the whole question at rest: for the rich man, as you will observe, offers up a prayer on his own account, he being a man who undoubtedly had abused God's

grace, and who fell in consequence into a state of torment. I should not think much of the mere fact of the prayer not being granted; for it might be said, that a man, who will not pray while on earth, has no right to hope that his prayers will be heard when they are offered up in hell; I should admit indeed that the prayer was of the very worst kind; it was a prayer wrung out by torment, and by the longing for the joys of Lazarus which seemed now beyond his reach; it was a prayer too not offered up to God Himself, but only to an exalted saint; and therefore the mere want of success of the prayer might cause us little wonder. It is the manner in which, and the grounds upon which, the prayer is refused, which appear to me to convey such important doctrine concerning the possibility of prayer reaching the case of those, who have once departed this life and are gone to their account. The wretched man in his torment entreats Abraham to have mercy upon him, and to send Lazarus to give him, if he might, but the smallest possible alleviation of his burning pains; and one cannot doubt that the heart of Abraham must have been softened by such an appeal. But I would have you observe, that in his answer he gives no compassion, because he knew it would be wasted; he merely refers the rich man to the history of his past life, as that

which contained the seed and rudiments of his present misery ; he speaks to him as to one whose lot is cast beyond possibility of change, as being separated from Lazarus by a great gulf, which neither could cross, even if they desired to do so.

Pray observe, moreover, that the reasoning of Abraham commended itself as conclusive, most awfully conclusive, to the mind of the rich man in torments. Had there been a shadow of hope, no doubt he would have caught at that shadow ; but when Abraham pointed out to him the impossibility of relief, his mind seems to have been convinced that it was only too true. He had such a view, as God grant none of us ever may have, of the awful boundary which God's justice has placed between what we call Heaven and Hell ; and from his point of view the impossibility of relief at once seemed certain, which we, from our point of view, sometimes pretend to doubt and sometimes even venture to deny.

The rich man therefore seems to me to be himself the best evidence we can have, of the entire impossibility of changing the condition of those, whose time of trial has terminated and whose time of retribution is come ; for those reasons which prevented the prayer offered to Abraham from being answered, though it is true that that prayer was one offered by a sinner in his torment, are

quite as cogent when they are applied to prayers offered upon earth by the friends who have been left behind. The parable shews us, not only the futility of the prayers of the dead for their surviving friends, but also the emptiness of the prayers of surviving friends for the dead. There is a great gulf fixed; the saint cannot pass it to help the sinner, neither can the sinner pass it to claim the company of the saint.

Thus then, as it seems to me, the parable, without any undue straining of its meaning, has important bearings upon two questions of much interest to us as members of the English Church, —of chief interest to us, happily, in the way of memory of errors gone by, of darkness which has been chased away. Nevertheless there are good reasons, why at the present time it is not by any means useless, sometimes to consider portions of Scripture, in their bearing not only upon Christian *truths*, but also upon what I may perhaps call Christian *errors*; and this must be my apology, if I have deviated somewhat from my usual mode of teaching, and have inclined to the thorny paths of controversy.

In conclusion, let me say, that if the parable teaches us negatively what it is not right that we should do, it also teaches us our duty positively and most emphatically. If it teaches us not to

make our prayers to saints, it teaches us also to make our prayers to God alone, to God who has become man in order that He may sympathise with our weaknesses and be able to have compassion upon our infirmities; but above all the parable teaches us, that whatever prayers we make, or whatever prayers are put up to God for us, must be offered now—*now* while we have grace to repent and amend, *now* while that time of trial lasts which God has given us, *now* while we have the power of presenting our bodies a living sacrifice to God, which is our reasonable service. Awful I know it is to contemplate the irreversible character of that destiny, which the life of man in this world determines. Just though we know the Judge to be, merciful and full of love to us as He has proved Himself to be, still the fact of our condition being sealed for evermore is almost too awful for our mind to dwell upon; yet if it be God's truth, as surely it would seem to be, then it is best to receive it in that only way in which it can profit us, namely, as a spur to zeal and holiness. We can make up our minds, and we can pray God to give us grace, to work while it is day, knowing that a night is coming on, in which no man can work.

SERMON XX.

THE TRUTH AS IT IS IN JESUS.

EPHESIANS iv. 20—24,

But ye have not so learned Christ: if so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

THIS passage has supplied a phrase which we have very often heard used, namely this, "the truth as it is in Jesus." We often hear it said, for example, that such or such a clergyman preaches the truth as it is in Jesus,—that a dying person was comforted and supported by a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus,—that for the conversion of the world it is necessary to declare the truth as it is in Jesus,—and so on. *But*

Any one who felt disposed to object to the phrase might remark, that in reality the words actually used by S. Paul differ from those in

common use; ~~he might notice that~~ What S. Paul says is this, ~~"as the truth is in Jesus,"~~ or, "as truth is in Jesus," and not "the truth as it is in Jesus." But I do not intend to make any such objection. I would rather take the words of the text as having suggested to Christians a certain phraseology which may be very useful and even very valuable. I would regard persons who use the phrase, "the truth as it is in Jesus," as intending to imply that Jesus Christ, who came into the world (as He said Himself) "to bear witness to the truth," did give to mankind a special and peculiar view of truth, and that this view may be styled with propriety "the truth as it is in Him,"—the truth as He has expounded it, as He has illustrated it, as He has enabled mankind to understand it; and I propose with this understanding to consider what this especial view of truth is, or ought to be, and what light is thrown upon it by the text, or rather by the text and context, by the language of the text itself and the spirit of the passage of which the text forms a part.

Now when the phrase "the truth as it is in Jesus" is used, it is probably almost always intended to imply, if nothing more, at least this, the great doctrine of human sin and of the redemption of mankind by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

These two things, human sin and human redemption, taken together, unquestionably form the substance of Holy Scripture; the former may be said to be the great theme of the Old Testament, the latter of the New; the Old Testament shews how man fell, the New how he has been raised again; the one is *Paradise Lost*, the other *Paradise Regained*. Not that the Old Testament contains entirely the dark side of human history, for its pages sparkle with hints of a Redeemer, with hopes of pardon, with promises of better things to come, with prophecies of a great deliverer, with testimonies to the infinite love of God. Nor on the other hand is the New Testament exclusively a book of redemption, for it contains teaching concerning human sin and depravity, quite as emphatic as anything that can be found in the older volume. But still, taking a general view, we may say that the Old Testament contains man's fall, and the New Testament man's recovery; and that it is when the two Testaments are bound together and made one book, that the book becomes emphatically God's Book, God's Word, the revelation of His will and His truth.

If then we should separate these two things which God has graciously joined together, and take by itself that truth which the Old Testament contains, namely, the truth that man has fallen

under the wrath of God, we should have a truth, but a truth emphatically as it is *not* in Jesus Christ; we should have the truth as it appears in its coldness and blackness and wretchedness, apart from that which has lightened it up and made it tolerable, even the smiles of Him who was "in Christ reconciling the world to Himself;" we should have the truth as we could have found it out to a considerable extent for ourselves, by observing the misery and manifest wickedness of the world, or by observing our own hearts, penetrating into their depths, examining their thoughts, and honestly confessing the amount of evil in them, of which we cannot but feel ashamed. The sinfulness and the consequent misery of mankind is therefore truth; it is only too true; but it is not the truth as it is in Jesus, it is rather the truth out of Him, away from Him, to the exclusion of Him. But when we read, as we do read so abundantly in Holy Scripture, that God sent forth His Son into the world that the world might be saved, that Christ humbled Himself that we might be exalted, that He died in order that we might live, that by His stripes we are healed, that Heaven has been opened through His Cross, that now we are no more estranged from God by wicked works but permitted to draw near to Him and address Him as our reconciled Father,—then we cannot

but perceive that we have here a branch of truth which we could never have found out for ourselves, which in fact would not have been a part of the truth if Christ had not made it so, a part of the truth which depends not upon anything that we have done or left undone, nor (so far as we know) upon any necessary principle of truth, but simply upon the undeserved love of Christ, the pity which He felt for us in our fallen condition, the equally unmeasured and unmerited love of God. I can see no objection to describing this peculiar portion of truth by the phrase "the truth as it is in Jesus"—it *is* truth, and it is *in* Jesus Christ—in Him, and by Him, and through Him,—He the declarer of the truth to mankind, He the only agent by whom the truth could be declared.

It would be giving somewhat of a different view of the matter, though it would after all be substantially the same, if we were to say that the truth as it is in Jesus ought to be taken as our expression of that belief concerning the Lord Jesus Christ which is contained in the Apostles' Creed. You will remember that by far the greater part of the Creed is assigned to the declaration of faith in the second Person of the Holy Trinity. We say "I believe in God the Father, maker of heaven and earth," and concerning the first Person we say

no more ; but the exposition of our faith in the Son runs on through sentence after sentence ; each important fact of His life duly set forth, His birth, His death, His resurrection, His ascension ; and therefore it may be said that the Apostles' Creed is mainly employed in setting forth the truth, especially as the truth is concerned with our Lord and His redeeming work. We Christians believe many things which other men believe in common with us, which heathens believed in old time, which infidels believe now ; there are truths of science, for instance, which no man may venture to doubt, truths of history, truths of morality, and the like ; but when we ask a child to rehearse the articles of its belief, or when we in mature years profess our faith, we do not include in the rehearsal all that we believe to be true of every kind, but we confine ourselves to that which we believe concerning God ; and even here we lay chief stress upon one particular side of our faith, and declare chiefly that which we believe to be true concerning the great revelation which God has made to us in the person and deeds of Jesus Christ His Son. He who rehearses the Apostles' Creed, therefore, may be said in a very intelligible sense to declare the truth as it is in Jesus ; and though they who use the phrase may possibly not refer in their own minds so distinctly to the words of

the Apostles' Creed as to the more abstract thought of redemption through the blood of Christ, still it will be seen that the two views are fundamentally the same, and that the truth as it is in the Apostles' Creed is essentially the truth of redemption through the eternal Son.

To this general view of the truth as it is in Jesus many persons would probably feel disposed to make several additions. They would be disposed to include within the limits of this truth, not only the knowledge of what God has done for us, but the knowledge of what we must on our part do in order to apprehend Christ and make our calling and election sure. Right views of faith, and the saving justifying power of faith, would enter largely into this conception of the truth as it is in Jesus, or of what may be called Gospel truth. Such passages as these, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," "We are justified by faith without the deeds of the law," "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works lest any man should boast,"—such passages as these would be regarded as belonging to the very essence of the truth as it is in Jesus; and so no doubt in a certain sense they do; only I think it right to remark, that the foundation of the truth is not here, but in that work which

Christ in His mercy hath done for us whether we believe it or not, in that mighty redemption of the human race which He effected upon the Cross, in that reconciliation of the world to God, which is true though none should believe it, and which was as true for Adam and Eve and all those who lived before Christ came into the world as it can be for us, before whose eyes Christ is manifestly set forth, crucified amongst us. The manner in which we are to avail ourselves of God's love is of course infinitely important; yet after all, it is nothing as compared with the love itself; Christ is the foundation; Christ is the truth; and the manner in which we build upon the foundation is, in the very nature of things, second to the fact of our having a foundation whereon to build.

I lay stress upon this, because I think that there is a great tendency amongst Christians to division and want of charity, arising from a neglect of the point which I am now noticing. A person apprehends Christ, if I may so speak, in a certain manner himself, and lays down the rule that every one else must follow his steps. He makes no allowance for difference of temperament, difference of education, difference of blood, difference of outward circumstances; all must see with his eyes, all must have his experience, all must say *Shib-*

boleth with precisely the same accent as himself. Now this is unjust and cruel; and the injustice and the cruelty are such as are exposed by the very phrase upon which I have been commenting. For the truth which according to that phrase Christians are to hold, is emphatically the truth *as it is in Jesus*,—not as it is in this man or in that, but expressly as it is in Him in whom all men find their centre of union, Him who has the nature of all, and who can sympathise with all, and who can love all, even the Lord Jesus Christ. And it is manifest, that, however precious a particular mode of conceiving the truth may be to me, yet I have no right to insist upon my brother regarding it as equally precious. I must go out of myself, and say, “Is this the truth as it is in me, or as it is in Christ?” If it be only the truth as it has been formed and fashioned by my own mind, then I must beware of presumption in attempting to force that view on my brother.

This caution becomes the more necessary when we remember that there have been those, who have attempted to force upon Christians certain peculiar views concerning predestination to eternal life as being especially and emphatically the substance of the Gospel. There have been periods when doctrines concerning the eternal purposes of God, and the predestination of certain persons to

eternal life,—doctrines which, I am bold to say, are at the bottom, metaphysical or philosophical, and not truly religious questions, questions quite as much for Mahometans and Hindus as for ourselves,—have nevertheless been advanced to the forefront of Christian divinity, represented as constituting the essence of the Gospel, as inseparable from the truth as it is in Jesus. Even in our own days one hears sometimes of the same kind of doctrine being taught, and the reception of it in all its fulness and all its consequences represented as the mark of a heart right with God, a heart taught by the Spirit, a heart illuminated and regenerate. Now it would take me beyond my purpose to enter fully into the question of predestination and its connection with Gospel truth; but I wish to observe, by the way, that the true defense, or at all events the simplest and best defense, of Christians against efforts to bring them into bondage by such views of truth, is a reference to the Apostles' Creed. If you want to know what the truest followers of the Lord, from the time of the Apostles to the present, have held to constitute the articles of the faith, or of the truth emphatically as it is in Jesus, then you cannot do better than refer to this most plain and unmistakeable exposition of it. Innovations in the Creed, whether Popish or Puritan, are best shewn

to be innovations by bringing them face to face with that primitive formula of what Christians ought to believe; and when you repeat that Creed, you feel at once that you have got out of the darkness of human reasonings into the light of Christ; from confusing dreams concerning God's eternal purposes, to the great fact that Christ died; from distressing suspicions that your doctrine does somehow cast a shade upon the justice and mercy of God, to the blessed assurance of the forgiveness of sins; in fact, from speculations, as they exist in the minds of ingenious men, to the very essence and marrow of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ.

If then we are to speak of the great doctrines which God has revealed to us in His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, let us take heed to confine ourselves to doctrines which He *has* revealed, and guard against confounding the truth as it is in Jesus with the truth as it is in our own speculations and guesses and reasonings. So interpreted, so confined to its proper and definite meaning, I think, as I said before, that no objection need be made to the phrase upon which I have been commenting: the phrase may not be, strictly speaking, a Scriptural one; but it may very fairly have been suggested by the words of S. Paul in the text, and may serve as a convenient and forcible expression of what we sometimes call the

Gospel, or the truth of the Gospel, or Gospel truth. But having said this, I wish you to observe, because it may be very useful that you should do so, that whether the phrase be a good one or a bad one in the sense which I have been attributing to it, such sense is altogether different from what S. Paul had in his mind when he wrote the text. Of course I should readily allow that it would be impossible for S. Paul or for any really Christian-hearted man to mention even the Name of Jesus Christ, and not feel the thought of the work of Christ rush through his mind: all the great truths of the Gospel, the fact of redemption from sin, pardon through the blood of the Cross, the coming of the Holy Ghost, and eternal life in the glory of the blessed Trinity, would be (as it were) concentrated in the name of Jesus, and would be implicitly declared by the mention of that most sacred Name: but still it will be clear to you, if you only read over the verses which I took as a text, and the accompanying verses, that the intention of S. Paul's mind is not at all to refer explicitly to the great doctrines of the Gospel, but something quite different. His aim was purely and wholly practical. He had been speaking of the way, in which other Gentiles, that is, Gentiles not converted to the faith of Christ, were accustomed to walk, of their alienation from the life of God

through the ignorance which was in them because of the blindness of their heart, and how they had in many cases given themselves up to all kinds of abomination, to work uncleanness, not now and then as they might chance to fall into temptation, but with the greedy appetite of those who could not have enough. Well, S. Paul had been speaking of the filthy character of Gentile life; and then he exhorts the Christians not to follow the example, just because they were Christians. “Ye have not so learned Christ;” on the other hand, you have learned quite the opposite of this; you have learned that you must be holy, because Christ was holy; you have learned that Christ redeemed you from the power of the Devil, and made it possible for you in His Name to renounce the Devil and all his works; you have learned that you must put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind. And to have learned all this the Apostle describes as having been taught by Christ, “as the truth is in Jesus;” the thing which he had in his mind therefore, and which was in immediate contact with the phrase when S. Paul wrote it, was that change of life and conversation, which was necessary for every man, who felt the pollution of Heathenism, and who sought refuge in the Church of Christ. It was no dogma of any kind, bad or

good ; it was no orthodox conception of the doctrine of redemption, however much that doctrine might be at the bottom of all : but it was the practical change from sin to holiness, the putting off of the works of the flesh and putting on the Lord Jesus Christ in purity and holiness, the coming out of the darkness of devil-worship and devil-practice into the light of simple-hearted Christian life, which was in the mind of S. Paul when he wrote those words upon which I have been discoursing.

Now I have admitted that it is no abuse of the words of S. Paul to construct out of them a phrase, which shall convey to our minds in a small compass a general description of the doctrinal scheme of the Gospel. I have said that the doctrine of redemption, or the doctrine of the Apostles' Creed, or the whole cycle of facts and doctrines communicated to us in the New Testament, may be with propriety and perhaps with advantage described by the phrase, "the truth as it is in Jesus;" but bearing in mind the passage from which that phrase seems to have sprung, I think it well that we should remember, how thoroughly the thoughts, which S. Paul connected with the phrase, were thoughts concerning the conversation and the life. We have no distinctly heathen world before our eyes, to which to refer by way of contrast ; and we who were born in a Christ-

ian country, and have had a Christian education, cannot be exhorted to put off the former conversation, which was ours when we did not know Christ. But there *is* practical heathenism even in professedly Christian countries, and there is conduct unworthy of their profession amongst many who call themselves Christians, and there are some vices rampant which are not held in the horror in which they ought to be held; and the task of examining our conduct and judging ourselves, lest we be judged of the Lord, is ever a hard task and an unpleasant one. And therefore it may be well to remind even the worshippers in a Christian Church, that the truth as it is in Jesus is evacuated of all its meaning, and becomes in fact a lie as it is in Satan, if it be confined to doctrines however real and sacred, and does not extend to the regulation of the conduct, the purifying of the life, the new creation of the whole man in righteousness and true holiness.

SERMON XXI.

CHRIST SUFFERING FOR SINS.

1 PETER iii. 18.

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.

IN the fourth chapter of his first Epistle S. Peter speaks of Christ having suffered for us in the flesh. He says, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind:" and with this beginning he goes on to deal in a practical manner with the truth of Christ having suffered for us. He bases upon that truth an exhortation to practical holiness, and also by reference to it cheers up the hearts of Christians in the prospect of persecution for Christ's sake: "Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings. If any man suffer as a Christian let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf."

I desire in this sermon, Christian Brethren, to

• speak to you concerning the sufferings of our blessed Lord for our sakes. If I intended to do so entirely with reference to practice, I could hardly have had a better text than the verse to which I have just called your attention: I could have shewn you from that, and from observation of the way in which S. Peter applies it, how the great truth of Christ having suffered for us in the flesh underlies all Christian practice, is the argument for all vigorous exertion against the world the flesh and the devil, is the surest foundation for true self-denying charity. Indeed this is one principal way of using the doctrine of the sufferings of Christ; whether the doctrine of atonement, redemption, reconciliation with God, be introduced in set terms into a sermon or not, every sermon ought to be built upon the acknowledgment of it as the corner-stone of the Christian faith. I think it very unfair and narrowminded, to fancy that a clergyman does not preach Christ's Gospel in its integrity, because he does not continually enunciate the doctrine of the Atonement in set terms. The practice of the Apostles sufficiently justifies me in saying this; while at the same time I allow that all Christian teaching must be based upon it, and that all truly Christian practice must be urged upon the assumption of it. There are occasions however when it may be useful, or even necessary,

to enter upon the doctrine of the sufferings of Christ as a doctrine,—not merely to assume the doctrine and base our practice upon it, but to consider more definitely what that doctrine is, upon which our practice is based. And as I purpose to attempt something of this kind, I have chosen for a text, not the verse of which I spoke in the opening of this sermon, but one which is more full and precise as an enunciation of doctrine. “Christ also hath suffered for us,” says S. Peter, “the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” These are words which describe very distinctly the nature of the redeeming work; and by discussing them we shall, I hope, through God’s blessing, be able to gain some light upon that, which must always in the nature of things be somewhat shrouded in darkness to human eyes.

Observe however in passing, Christian Brethren, that even this clear enunciation of the redemptive effect of Christ’s sufferings has been introduced with reference to practice. The verse is introduced with a “for”—“for Christ also hath suffered for sins.” Why this form of speech? Look at the preceding verse: “it is better,” says the Apostle, “if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. *For* Christ also hath once suffered for sins.” The need of an argument, you will perceive, for patient suffering, when they knew

themselves to be innocent, was thus the occasion of making the very full statement in the text of the result of the sufferings of Christ.

I now proceed to say something upon the doctrine itself, as it comes before us in S. Peter's words.

In the first place observe that S. Peter says, "Christ suffered *for sins*;" not merely suffered but suffered *for sins*; that is, clearly for our sins, for the sins of mankind. If we had no other portion of Scripture remaining to us but this one Epistle of S. Peter, or this one chapter of the Epistle, we could not pass over the words "for sins," without assigning great importance to them. We should be compelled to do this, because the argument of the passage would not be complete without them. S. Peter wishes to encourage men to be patient when they suffer and are innocent; then it would be sufficient, if they owned Christ as their teacher and example, to say, "For Christ also suffered, though He was a just man." But the Apostle says much more than this; he not only says, that Christ suffered and was innocent; but he speaks of Him as having "suffered for sins"—as though the cause of His sufferings was so remarkable, that it was impossible to refer to *them* without referring to *it*. Christ then suffered "*for sins*," that is, for the sins of mankind. These were, in some

way, the cause of His sufferings. If the sins had not been, His sufferings had not been. However strange the connection may seem, a connection undoubtedly there is between the sins, which have been committed from the time of Adam until now, and the death of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross under Pontius Pilate.

Perhaps the connection between the sins of mankind and the sufferings of Christ is made more striking by the word *once*. "Christ hath *once* suffered for sins." Sins may be committed often, nay are being committed continually, but Christ died *once* and for all; that one event stands by itself; it is unique in the world's history; it can never be repeated, it never need be repeated. This point is dwelt upon in the Epistle to the Hebrews.* The high-priest of the Jewish Law went into the Holy of Holies once every year; there was a continual remembrance of sin, a solemn yearly atonement on account of it: but Christ, says the Apostle, did not "offer Himself often, as the high-priest entereth into the Holy place every year with blood of others; for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now *once* in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed unto men *once* to die, but after this

* Chap. ix.

the judgment : so Christ was *once* offered to bear the sins of many." Now this passage from the Epistle to the Hebrews comes in to illustrate the text ; it shews the peculiar emphasis of the phrase, "Christ *once* suffered for sins ;" it helps to make us appreciate the marvellous but blessed truth, that the one offering of Christ is connected with the sins of the whole world.

But further, S. Peter adds in the text, "the just for the unjust;" and the truth which these words contain we might have supplied, if the words themselves had not been there. For Christ we know was without sin ; and the very thing which enabled Him to suffer for sins was this, that He had no sins Himself. All we the rest have gone astray, like lost sheep ; all we are unjust, unholy, unable to stand before God upon our own righteousness : and as we are thus unjust, or unrighteous, so is Christ emphatically *the* just one, *the* righteous one, the only one born of woman, of whom it can be asserted in the fullest strictness of the words, that He "did no sin." Christ the just then gave Himself for us the unjust ; suffered for us men and for our salvation ; died for us, according to the Scripture ; shewed His great love towards us in that while we were yet sinners He died for us. All this might have been concluded from the words, "Christ suffered for sins ;" but

the addition of the phrase, "the just for the unjust," increases the emphasis, and brings forcibly before our minds our extreme need of salvation and our helplessness in ourselves to obtain it.

Thus we see a wonderful efficacy attributed to our Lord's sufferings. It may perhaps be worth while to ask, by the way, whether in speaking of these efficacious sufferings we are to understand the death upon the cross only, or all the other sufferings of His suffering life. No doubt Scripture speaks chiefly of the cross, when it speaks of the sufferings of Christ; the *blood* of Christ is spoken of emphatically, as that which takes away sin and which purges the conscience; and we may rightly speak of ourselves as saved by the *cross* of Christ, of His *body* having been offered as a sacrifice for sin, of the saints having washed their robes and made them white in the *blood* of the Lamb. Still it may perhaps be wrong to draw too broad a line between the crucifixion and all that precedes it; the agony and bloody sweat can scarcely be separated from the cross and passion; and indeed the whole life upon earth may be rightly regarded as belonging to the great work of redemption, according to the language of the Creed,* "who for us men and our salvation came down from heaven,"—the birth, and the life as

* The same view is made very prominent in the Litany.

well as the death closely connected with, and undertaken for, the expiation of the sins of men.

But however this may be, that is, whether in speaking of the sufferings of our Lord for sins it is more correct to regard those sufferings as stretching over His whole life, or to restrict our consideration rather to the agony and death upon the cross, certainly we shall not do wrong in giving a large amount of our consideration to this great closing scene of suffering. The death of Christ,—the cross of Christ,—the blood of Christ,—these phrases seem to be to our minds almost an epitome of the Christian religion: and indeed the fact of our marking each child added to Christ's flock with the sacred symbol of His passion, is a continual evidence of the place which the sufferings of the Lord upon the cross occupy in the estimation of the Christian Church. Passing on however to the next point in the Apostle's language, we find it stated that Christ suffered, the just for the unjust, "that He might bring us to God"—that He might bring us to God. We were estranged then before. Surely we were; this is the very curse of our condition, that we are very far gone from original righteousness, that we are not at one with God as we were created, that death hath passed upon us all, for that all have sinned. And Christ hath suffered for sins to bring us back. How? By

setting us an example how we ought to walk? by shewing us the beauty of holiness, by teaching us how noble it is to be gentle and forgiving, what perfect freedom there is in obedience to God, how much better it is to do good than to do evil? We wanted more than this: Christ did this for us; but had He done no more He would not have brought us back to God. Did He do it by teaching then? Surely He taught as one having authority and not as the scribes; surely He spake as never man spake; that Sermon on the Mount for instance, where is there any other sermon which leads so directly and so simply as that to the ways of holiness and peace?

This is all true; and yet it is also true that had Christ only taught us the way of holiness, even in such clear and intelligible language as that of the Sermon on the Mount, He would not have performed that work of bringing us to God, of which S. Peter speaks. No—teacher and example was Christ, but He was more than this: our sense of need and infirmity teaches us that in order to be the physician of souls, in order to supply a cure for the great universal disease of humankind, Christ must be something different from and entirely beyond a teacher and an example. We want to hear of something concerning pardon of sins, something concerning reconciliation, some-

thing concerning being brought back to God. And this the Apostles preached in the Name of their Lord ; peace through the blood of His cross was their message, a propitiation for sin, a ransom from slavery, salvation for the lost, life to those who were dead,—this was what they had to announce as the Gospel for mankind. “Glory to God, peace on earth, good will to men,”—that lay which the angels sang when Christ was born, they took up as the subject of their preaching, when they had to explain to men what had been brought about by the sacrifice of the cross of Christ.

Now this blessed change in the spiritual condition of mankind constitutes the essence of that message which we have to deliver to the world. Whether we speak of the atonement, that is, the making at one those who were at twain before,—or of redemption, that is, the purchasing back again of that which was lost as in slavery,—or of reconciliation between God and man, as between two who were estranged, and who in Christ have been brought together again ; or whatever phrase we use to express that doctrine which Scripture so clearly contains, and which our own hearts so gratefully receive, we recognise this great truth of salvation having been offered to us on conditions, which were only made possible by the sufferings of Christ for sins. We attribute our salvation to

Him and not to ourselves, because it is through His redeeming work that salvation has been offered to us. We are accounted righteous for the merits of Christ, and not for any merits of our own. This is at once the doctrine of Scripture, and the doctrine of the formularies of the English Church. That it is the doctrine of Scripture perhaps I need hardly take up your time in proving, or may refer to the text as one verse out of many in which the doctrine is to be found; or rather I would say, that it is not so much a reference to particular texts as a reference to the whole spirit and tone of the New Testament, upon which we should chiefly rely in speaking of the doctrine of redemption as the doctrine of Scripture. So also with regard to the formularies of the Church. I might quote the eleventh article, which speaks of "the justification of man," but I think it is still better to refer to the general spirit of the Prayer-book, to remind you how that almost every collect and prayer implies the doctrine, above all how that most solemn service for the celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's body and blood brings out into clearest light the wonderful truth of a sacrifice for sins and remission of sins through Christ's Holy Passion. And the doctrine seen thus is seen to better advantage than when enunciated in a set form as in the eleventh article; you see

how it is the life of all true devotion, the foundation of Christian worship, the ground of all Christian conduct; you see much more of the value of the doctrine, when you are brought by confession of sin and absolution and supplication in the Name of Christ and solemn litany and ascription of praise to perceive, that the whole Christian scheme turns upon the one great truth of Christ having "suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

Now if a person is content to take the truth as I have here put it forward, or as he finds it in the Scripture, or as he finds it in the Prayer Book, I think he will meet with no practical difficulty. He will feel that the love of Christ constrains him to a life of holiness, however little he may be able to comprehend the mystery of the way in which that love was manifested. Indeed he may be content as a reasonable man to leave the mystery unexplained. Is it likely that he *should* be able to explain it? Would it not almost certainly prove, that the scheme of redemption was *not* divine, if we with our limited powers, and our utter inability (proved by abundant experience) to fathom the mystery of moral evil in the world, were able to fathom the much greater mystery of the manner in which sin has been taken away? Hence it is the office of Christian faith to accept the doctrine of

redemption; and as surely as any one takes upon himself to ask, "*how* can these things be?"—to inquire into the manner, in which the sufferings of Christ have taken away sin and brought us home to God,—so surely, as it seems to me, will one of these evil results ensue. On the one hand a man, who inquires into the *how* and cannot find it, may be tempted to think that things *cannot* be, because he cannot say *how* or *why*. I mean, that a man, who has puzzled his intellect to explain, upon principles of human reasoning, how the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ led as a necessary consequence to the redemption of the human race, and who has been unable (as assuredly he will be) to track the hidden thread which connects the one with the other, may be tempted to deny the redemption because he cannot tell how it resulted from the Lord's death. This is one evil result: and if this do not come to pass, another may, and it is this: a person inquiring *how* redemption has been brought about by the Lord's passion, and not being able to solve the mystery any more than the other inquirer of whom I spoke, but not being willing like him to give up the precious truths of the Gospel, may be tempted to invent a theory of his own in order to account in some way for the results of the death of our Lord; to represent the pardon of sin as though it were something re-

ducible to human forms, in fact to make our own imperfect dealings with each other a measure of the dealings of God. This also I call an evil result, not so much because it obscures the truth to the minds of those who so conceive it, (for that is a matter chiefly for their own consideration,) but because it leads them to imagine that the manner in which they represent the truth to their own minds is the only way in which it can be represented, and to throw stumbling-blocks in the way of weak brethren, who may think that the doctrine of the Gospel is unreasonable because it is explained unreasonably. One of these two evil results will follow, I say, when men set themselves to work to explain what God has not explained, and what in the nature of things one would not expect could be explained.

If any one say to me, Then you bid us blindfold our eyes in order that we may receive the Gospel; I reply, Nay, Christian brother, I bid you do nothing of the kind. Look at sin; there it is, polluting God's creation, making this beautiful world loathsome, turning the garden of the Lord into a howling wilderness. 'There it is; preachers of the Gospel did not put it there, were not the first to find it out: it was known and felt and wept over long before any Gospel was preached in the world. Here then is the mystery—how did

sin come into the world? And when I tell you that Jesus Christ came to put away sin, and shew you all the credentials of His mission, all the proofs that He came from God because God loved the world, and when I tell you also that He Himself gave us the doctrine of sin having been purged away by His sufferings and death, what disgrace is it to your intellect if you accept the doctrine, and yet accept it in faith? What claim can you urge, why God should not only save you, but explain to you precisely how He does so? No, Christian Brethren, there is no shame in accepting humbly the doctrine of the Cross, and there is no wisdom in rejecting it. Our true wisdom is to know our own weakness, to lament over our own sins, and when we hear of redemption through the blood of Christ to throw ourselves upon His mercy and say, "By Thy Cross and Passion, Good Lord, deliver us."

SERMON XXII.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

ROMANS iii. 28.

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

THE eleventh Article of the Church of England states, that “we are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings: wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort.”

This is a statement, and a very plain and simple statement, of that which is usually called the doctrine of Justification by Faith. The essential points in it seem to be these. In the first place, no works or deservings of our own can ever have the effect of causing us to be accounted righteous before God; they cannot purchase Heaven, cannot enable us to stand before God and say, “I am a profitable servant, I have earned

my reward, I enter upon eternal life as the wages of my service, not as a free gift." In the next place, that, in virtue of which we do stand as righteous before God, is the work of Christ our Lord: His assumption of humanity, and suffering for our sakes even unto death, have obtained for us, according to the will and purpose of the righteous God, and according to the love of our Father in Heaven, a righteousness which otherwise we could not have had. And in the third place, the means whereby we avail ourselves of the mercy of God to us in Jesus Christ is faith; we take Him as our Lord, declare ourselves His servants, ask God for a share of the blessings which His redemptive work has obtained for mankind. We do not, as I apprehend, by thus speaking, set up faith as against or above charity, or pronounce faith to be of any avail without works, or disparage sacramental ordinances in which faith can be pre-eminently exhibited and by which it can work; but we assert that there is need of a distinct act of the will on the part of those to whom Christ is preached. To know that Christ has died manifestly cannot benefit those who treat the fact as one with which they have nothing to do; there must be on the part of the human heart and mind a recognition of what Christ has done, an abandoning of trust in ourselves, an acknowledgment of our

own unrighteousness, a confession of the mercy of God in Jesus Christ; and however this may be expressed or described, the action of the mind to which I refer is an act of faith; and this faith leads to Christian fruits; it brings forth the fruit of a holy, godly, religious life in this world, and the fruit of life eternal in the world to come.

Now I apprehend that this statement of the doctrine of Justification by Faith must appear simple and reasonable. When I say *simple*, I do not mean that it involves no mystery, because it involves the very deepest and most inscrutable of all mysteries; but the mysteries which it involves exist quite as much for the learned as for the ignorant, quite as much for him who has studied the question by the aid of all the volumes which have been written on the subject as for the plain Christian who knows very little more than what the Bible tells him; the mystery belongs to the subject, and if there were no mystery it would be difficult to believe that the doctrine was divine. But I call the statement simple, because any one who is prepared to believe what God has told him can perceive a very simple road to Heaven; the practical part of it is simple; it is a Gospel for the simple and the poor. And when I say that the statement is *reasonable*, I do not mean that the doctrine is one which human reason

could have discovered, or which human reason can demonstrate to be true, or even completely explain; but I mean that our sense of weakness is such that the doctrine commends itself to us as one, which evinces its reasonableness by its adaptation to human wants. We feel our necessities, we do not see how they are to be met, we groan under a weight of sin, and we do not see how it is to be removed; then comes the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and exhibits *Him* to us as the good physician of our souls, points to His humiliation and sufferings, assures us that it was not for nothing that such sufferings were endured by such a sufferer, bids us believe in Him and be saved, declares Him to be a propitiation for our sins and a Mediator of a covenant between God and ourselves; and the human mind accepts this view of the Lord's death; not pretending to fathom the view, it still sees the glory of it, recognises the love of God which it exhibits, seizes upon it as the divinely appointed mode of escape from the wrath to come.

Nevertheless I need hardly tell you that the doctrine in question has been the occasion of much and most bitter controversy: at the epoch of the Reformation there was no doctrine which gave rise to so much discussion; and the reason is I think obvious. When Luther first entered upon the

movement, which terminated in the establishment of the Churches of the Reformation, he found the general condition of religion to be most deplorable; it was not merely that ceremonies had grown to a most unreasonable and injurious extent, so as to disguise rather than illustrate the doctrines with which they were connected; nor was it only that the services of the Church were performed in a tongue unknown by the bulk of the people, and therefore (comparatively speaking) unedifying; nor was it only that several doctrines had grown up, which were unauthorised by Holy Scripture; but rather this was the fact, that the whole tendency of religion, as it was popularly exhibited, was to put the people upon a wrong road, to represent Heaven as a prize which might be won by human efforts, sins as faults which might be cured by money, the eternal life of the soul not as the gift of God but as a matter of bargain (so to speak) between man and God. This is a statement in few words of a condition of things, which to describe fully would require a volume; and I regard Luther as a man who saw very distinctly the root of the evil, and saw also the remedy; he found the root of the evil by comparing the teaching of his day with his own experience; he found something in his own deep conviction of sin and estrangement from God, which the physicians of

his day could not deal with; and perceiving thus the evil he perceived also the remedy. He had not to go far for it; even if the Bible had been as unknown a book in those days as some party-historians have endeavoured to represent it, the remedy was still at hand. Daily he repeated, as we do, in the words of the Creed, "I believe in Jesus Christ, and in the forgiveness of sins." Here was the escape from all the torments of a restless conscience, all the horrors of a stern yet broken law. This was Justification by Faith; here was Jesus Christ, in the wonders of His Birth and Cross and Passion, professed as the source of the forgiveness of sins; here was the "I believe"—the act of faith—as the means of claiming God's forgiveness. That Luther was led by his impetuous character to say many things in connection with this doctrine which were most unjustifiable, ought I think to be freely granted; for my own part I should be quite disposed to grant, that on some occasions he used language which turned the true doctrine which he desired to illustrate into quite a false doctrine; but still, the great principle, that a man is justified by the merits of Christ and not by any merits of his own, which Luther said he found in every page of S. Paul's writings, and which indeed is found throughout the whole New Testament, and which is recog-

nised as a primary truth of the New Testament by being inserted in the Apostles' Creed,—this great principle for which Luther contended was not only the remedy for the disorders of the Church in his days, but it is also for all times and conditions of the Church “a wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort.” The doctrine has (as I have said) been connected with much bitter controversy ; it is lamentable that it should have been so, but so it has been ; yet it is by no means of necessity so connected ; it is a doctrine not to be quarreled about, but to be received with gratitude ; it ought not to be a mark of separation amongst Christians, but a bond of fellowship ; it ought to suggest to us the thought, not of Christ's followers contending which is the right way to follow Him, but of Christ Himself lifted up above the world, and calling all men to come to Him and so to be saved from their sins.

I have said thus much concerning the doctrine of Justification by Faith without referring particularly to the words of the text. You will easily perceive, however, that all which has been said does in reality bear very closely upon the text, because the text may be taken as an expression of the doctrine of Justification by Faith. If a person were directed to quote a single verse from Scripture, which should contain in itself a full

enunciation of the doctrine, I suppose he could scarcely do better than produce the text, "We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." No verse could answer better than this the purpose of him, who should desire to exhibit in one sentence of Scripture the doctrine of Justification by Faith; in fact it might be said, that we mean by the doctrine that which S. Paul meant by the text, that no article of the Church or any other human commentary can make more clear, than the text has made it, the great doctrine in question. Nevertheless it must always be borne in mind, that in the case of Holy Scripture, as in the case of other books, it is a dangerous thing to take any short passage away from its context and interpret it by itself; and therefore I wish to take the words of the text in connection with the other parts of the chapter in which they occur, and in relation to the general drift of S. Paul's argument. The doctrine of Justification by Faith, like all other doctrines, may be perverted, may be abused, may be made to mean that which it does not mean, may be turned into an argument for idleness instead of being the grand argument for work and diligence; and this danger is best avoided by observing how the Apostle himself introduces it, what part it plays in his argument, what the great truth was which he was chiefly exerting himself to enforce.

I may seem to be introducing you, Christian Brethren, by these remarks to a difficult and complicated subject. When we remember the amount of controversy which has existed concerning S. Paul's teaching, we may think it a hopeless task to give any just notion of his argument in a short pulpit address. But indeed it seems to me, that the controversies have rather made the difficulties than solved them; and that if, putting all thought of controversy aside, we look simply at what S. Paul has written, we shall find that, however it may be true that there are difficulties in understanding this member of the argument or that, it is equally true that the general scope of the argument is clear, and the conclusion announced in the text irresistible. What then was the point which lay at the root of S. Paul's whole argument? It was this: whether obedience to the ordinances of the Jewish Law could be deemed necessary to salvation, whether it should be required of Gentile converts, whether there were in it anything which was to be held in conjunction with faith in Christ, or whether it were all done away by Christ and declared by His Cross and Passion to be incapable of making a sinner righteous before God. This question has now to us faded in the dimness of distance: rejoicing as we do in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, we can perhaps

hardly understand that such a question should be argued, much less that it should form the grand point of discussion in any age of the Church. Yet so it was in Apostolic times; a very little consideration shews us why it was so, and why it was necessary for the due establishment of Christ's Church that the question should be set at rest at once and for ever; to do this was one of the great tasks entrusted to S. Paul; himself a Jew, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the Law a Pharisee, he nevertheless by the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit saw with a keenness of view, which seems to have been vouchsafed to no other Apostle, the error and danger of allowing any work of the Law, be it what it might, to be regarded as in any way cooperating with the Lord Jesus Christ for the justification of man. The work of Christ was one and complete: men were redeemed by Him: through Him they could cry Abba, Father: through Him they had forgiveness of sins: and to allow any merit to works of any kind, though those works might plead that they were part of the Law given to Israel by God Himself, was to make faith void and the promise of God through Christ of none effect. Now it is in connection with such a view of the subject as this that S. Paul declares in the text, "We conclude therefore that a man is justified by faith without

the deeds of the Law:" and the design of the passage is this, to declare that salvation is through Christ and through Him alone, not to draw any distinction amongst the various ways in which faith may be exercised, not to insist upon an assurance of salvation on the part of the believer as the condition of salvation, not to depreciate the practical outcoming of faith in works of holiness and charity as compared with the mental effort of trusting in Christ, not in fact to support any one of the perverted views which from time to time have been put forward as containing the essence of Christian faith, but to exhibit Jesus Christ Himself as the one sacrifice for sins, as the Way the Truth and the Life, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end, the first and the last of the Christian's hopes, and to declare Him therefore as the only legitimate object of faith whether for Gentile or for Jew.

This seems to me to be the real teaching of the text; and I cannot think that at the time when S. Paul wrote the words, and when the controversy concerning Jew and Gentile was in its full heat, any one could have doubted concerning his meaning. Many might have questioned the truth of his conclusion, and might have regarded him (as we know that many did regard him) as too bold a destroyer of the old law; but that he intended

to assert the inconsistency of putting anything else as coordinate with the work of Christ in the redemption of man and the forgiveness of his sins, this I think would never have been doubted whether by friend or foe. Did then the force of the Apostle's words at all evaporate with the interest of the Jew and Gentile controversy? Did his arguments do their work and then cease to be useful, hanging up in the storehouse of Scripture as old armour which has done its work? Surely not; for not only would this be contrary to the general character of Scripture, which has shewn, and no doubt will continue to shew, such a marvellous power of adaptation to the varying wants and condition of the Church, but from the very nature of the case S. Paul's argument had a much wider scope than any question concerning Jew and Gentile could exhaust. S. Paul was led by this controversy to argue out and explain and insist upon the completeness of the work of Christ. Nothing was to be put, I will not say in competition but even, in alliance with it. The Jew must not stand upon his descent from Abraham, or his covenant of circumcision, or his keeping of the Law—if he did, he made the Cross of Christ of none effect. And having come to this conclusion S. Paul had plainly arrived at a truth, or rather he had been led to give special prominence to a truth.

which was the very foundation of the Christian Church. Jesus Christ the corner-stone—He the only Mediator between God and man—He the only ground of hope—He the true object of faith—this was the doctrine of S. Paul; this was his solution of the great question how the Gentiles were to be saved; the enforcement of this truth constituted him in a peculiar sense “the Apostle of the Gentiles;” and it is quite clear that the truth for which he contended is quite as necessary for, and quite as precious to, us in this nineteenth century, as it was when the question was still agitated, whether for justification it were necessary to “keep the law.”*

—*Necessary to keep the law*—yes, those words had a sense once which they have not now. But still they *have* a sense for us; and the question how far it is necessary for us to keep the law, to keep God’s commandments, is one which can never lose its importance, and the consideration of which brings us to the practical side of the doctrine of Justification by Faith. Let me therefore say one word upon it in conclusion. Doubtless we must all strive with our hearts and souls to keep God’s law; doubtless we cannot be justified before God, unless in the great day of account we are found to have done so: doubtless also we shall

* Acts xv. 24.

eschew that monstrous view of justification to which S. Paul alludes, and which is not extinct, I fear, altogether in our own days, that we ought to sin in order that God's grace may abound; but, Christian Brethren, the real question is, in what light we are to regard all works of righteousness, all obedience to God's law, all efforts to do good, all submission of our will to His, with reference to the pardon of our sins and our entrance into eternal life: and the answer is, that we do wrong if we allow ourselves to consider for a moment how much obedience, how much doing of good, how complete an abnegation of self, will entitle us to God's favour. No amount will do this. Human works of righteousness are not a coin current in the kingdom of God. After we have done all that we can do, we must (as our Saviour tells us) confess ourselves "unprofitable servants;" this is the acme of merit; this is the crowning deed of the most eminent among the followers of Christ. In fact, the justification of man is not a question of how much or how little; to be made a child of God is, as the service of Holy Baptism teaches, and as Baptism itself most emphatically declares, the receiving of something "which by nature we cannot have"; it is the gift of God, the gift of God through Christ. He who considers how much will be necessary to make him just before God,

must ever serve God in the spirit of a slave. It is only when a man realises his position as redeemed freely by the blood of Jesus Christ, as adopted into God's family for no merit of his own, that he can serve God in perfect freedom, and consider all that he can do as nothing in comparison with what has been done by God's grace for him, and return love for love, and cry out in the spirit of adoption, "Abba, Father!"

SERMON XXIII.

THE INSTITUTION OF THE EUCHARIST.

1 COR. xi. 27.

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

DID you ever ask the question, Christian Brethren, how it has come to pass that the Epistles of the New Testament contain so small an amount of teaching concerning the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper? You may read through whole Epistles, and find no mention of the subject, and perhaps no allusion to it. I know that some persons will tell you that the Epistles are full of what is called Eucharistic doctrine, or teaching concerning the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; and in one sense this is true. The Epistles are full of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and the Eucharist is the Church's commemoration of that sacrifice, and therefore in general what is said concerning one will apply in some sort to the other. If an

Epistle teaches us the real doctrine concerning the substance, it cannot fail to give us right teaching concerning that, which I may venture without irreverence to call the shadow ; and if we learn from the Epistles how we ought to regard and venerate the great sacrifice which was once made upon Calvary, we shall have learned in the best manner possible how we ought to regard and venerate that mystery, concerning which Christ said, "This is My body, which is given for you," and "This is My blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." But while all this is true, it is also quite true that there is very little direct teaching on the subject ; such teaching, I mean, as you would hear in a modern sermon, or read in a book of divinity ; it is impossible to deny this fact ; you may explain it as you will, and draw what conclusion you please from it, but a fact it is, and a fact it must ever remain.

Modern sermons then are wrong, and books of divinity are wrong, you will say, in dealing with the subject as they often do. No : that is not the conclusion to which I wish to bring you, Christian Brethren. I should very much condemn myself, if I came to this conclusion ; for I have preached many sermons upon the subject of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and I think it highly necessary that clergymen in general should do the same

thing. I cannot imagine how a clergyman can refrain from preaching on the subject, even though he may perceive that somehow or other the Apostles have to a great extent refrained. It seems to me that the Apostles were right, and that we are right; they adapted themselves to their times, and we must adapt ourselves to our own; they pressed those points of Christian duty which seemed to them most to require pressing, and we in like manner must bring into prominence and endeavour to impress upon the minds of our people those points, which amongst ourselves are most in danger of being misunderstood and forgotten. And here we come upon the explanation of that feature of the New Testament to which I have referred. Just remember how the Apostles were situated, and then I think you will understand why their Epistles contain so little teaching concerning the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Whenever any one of the Apostles joined with any Christian congregation in worship on the Lord's day, the whole of the congregation united in celebrating the Holy Sacrament: this was the special purpose for which they came together: the very name of their service was "the breaking of bread:" when they met on the Lord's day, this was why they met: they joined in prayer as we do, they sang hymns as we do, they read the

Scriptures as we do ; but the great service for which they met was one in which Christians in modern days do not always join, namely, the service of the holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Now I am not drawing any comparison, observe, between the goodness of Christians in those days and Christians in our own. It is very foolish to look back to those early days as a sort of golden age of the Gospel, and to imagine that all who in those days were called by the name of Christ were really saintly men ; and it is very foolish on the other hand to laud our own age as an absolutely golden one, and to suppose that until modern days no one really understood what the Gospel meant. But so far as this point of Christian duty is concerned there can be no doubt as to which people were most walking in the way of Christ, the primitive Christians or ourselves. Christ had told them how they were to celebrate His death, and they did as He told them ; and whenever an Apostle came amongst them, he found that they were walking in the way of Christ so far as this matter was concerned ; the obedience was perfect ; no Christian ever thought of disobeying ; and therefore (as I apprehend) the Apostles had little to say on the subject ; there were other things which demanded their attention more ; upon this point all seemed to be going well.

I have no doubt that if the Apostles had had to deal with Christians of the present age, they would have acted very differently. If they could suddenly rise from their graves and take part in the service of a modern Church, and see the people apparently very attentive to every part of divine service except that one which the Lord appointed Himself, if they could see the nine going their way and the one remaining (like the lepers in the Gospel), then they would say, "This entirely alters the case: these people do indeed want teaching: how wonderful it is that persons calling themselves by the name of Christ can thus leave His own command unfulfilled!"

Hence you will perceive, Christian Brethren, that the absence of teaching on the subject of the Holy Communion in the Epistles is no argument that the Holy Communion was an unimportant part of divine worship in Apostolic days. It only bears witness to the fact, which we know very well from other sources, that the Holy Communion was that part of a Christian's duty and privilege in early days, which he was least likely to neglect. The Apostles said little on the subject, precisely upon the same principle that renders it unnecessary to speak to healthy strong people concerning the necessity of taking care of their health, and being cautious about their food, and regular in taking exercise:

these are the hints you would give to the weak and sickly, the strong you would think needed no such advice. That this was the principle upon which the Apostles acted is evident from the manner, in which they were led to speak of the holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper whenever they did think it right to introduce it expressly into their teaching. So far as I have observed, there are only two places in which direct reference is made to the subject: they are both in the first Epistle of S. Paul to the Corinthians: one of them is in the tenth chapter, the other in the eleventh, from which latter chapter I have taken my text. Now just notice those two places, and observe why it was in each case that the Apostle was led to write as he did.

In the first the circumstances were these. Some of the Corinthians had been induced to take part in idol-worship: at least they had done so indirectly. They had received invitations from their unconverted friends and relations to join them in idol-feasts, and they had accepted these invitations; I do not think that they intended by doing so to be unfaithful to their Master Christ; they reasoned that the idol was nothing, and that the feast was a social one, and that it might seem churlish to stay away; and so they went. But they were not easy in their consciences about the matter; they fancied that after all it might possibly be

wrong, and therefore they applied (as it would seem) to S. Paul for a determination of the difficulty. S. Paul solved the difficulty by explaining to them, that as in joining in Holy Communion they really became partakers of Christ, so in joining in an idol-feast they really became partakers of idolatry: he told them that they could not drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils, could not be partakers of the Lord's Table and of the table of devils. This teaching is, I think, clear and convincing enough; but what I am concerned with just now is this, namely, that S. Paul was led to speak of the Holy Communion because the Corinthians had done something which they ought not to have done, because they had brought disgrace upon their Christian name, and because the privilege which they enjoyed as partakers of Christ in the Holy Communion was the best proof possible of the manner in which their Christian name had been disgraced.

Now pass on to the second place in which S. Paul speaks directly of the Holy Communion. The text which I have taken for this sermon is a verse out of the passage; and the passage itself begins at ver. 17 of chap. xi. and goes down to the end of the chapter. How came it about that the Apostle wrote this passage? The reason is obvious enough. The most horrible abuses had

crept into the Corinthian Church, abuses which we should hardly have deemed possible if we had not found them chronicled in Holy Scripture. They came together, as the Apostle says, "not for the better, but for the worse:" the rich made their coming together an occasion of feasting, the poor were left to shift for themselves: "one was hungry, and another was drunken:" men did not "discern the Lord's body," they treated His Table as a common table, made it a table of revelry; they ate and drank unworthily, and so received condemnation to themselves. I might quote this account as a proof of the folly of supposing that the primitive age was quite a golden age; but what I wish you to notice is rather this, that it is this horrible profanity to which we are indebted for S. Paul's views on the subject of the Lord's Supper. Humanly speaking, if the Corinthians had been more devout, we should have had no notice such as the chapter to which I am now referring contains; if all had gone on soberly and orderly at Corinth, they would have gained but we should have lost. It was the atrocious and almost incredible pollution of the Lord's Table, which led S. Paul to put upon record the most distinct advice, that the whole New Testament contains, concerning the practical duty of presenting ourselves before the Lord at His Table.

Hence I regard these two instances, in which S. Paul did speak out concerning the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as an explanation of the reason why he did *not* speak out at other times. I think we may even say we are thankful that the offense of the Corinthians was made by God's good providence to abound to the edification of the Church, and that S. Paul was thus led once or twice to break through his usual rule, and expound his views upon this great subject. What were his views? When he did take the subject in hand, how did he treat it? In what light did he put the Christian duty of coming to the Lord's Table, and the unchristian duty of, in some cases, refraining from coming? Of course you can look for yourselves, and see the manner in which he dealt with his subject; but the special point to which I desire to call your attention is this, that S. Paul went back at once to the first institution of the holy Sacrament by the Lord Himself. Men had profaned that holy ordinance; they had looked upon it as a common thing; they had not taken the shoes from their feet, as men should do who tread on holy ground; they had made a solemn service into a debauch and a revelry. Could they have done this if they had understood what they were doing? Would not our Lord's own prayer for those who crucified Him apply to this case of

men crucifying Him afresh, and putting Him to an open shame: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"? If they knew what it was, they could not do it, they would not dare to do it, they would not wish to do it. Therefore S. Paul deals in no hard and severe language; he simply recounts the history of what our blessed Lord did on the eve of His passion; he relates the history very much in the same manner as you find it in the Gospels, especially in S. Luke's Gospel; on the night that He was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks He brake it, and said, "Take, eat, this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me:" after the same manner He took the cup, saying, "This cup is the New Testament in My blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me." S. Paul put more faith in the recital of this simple tale than in any strong language that he could use. Was it not eloquent in its simplicity? Could any one be persuaded to take a more solemn view of the Holy Sacrament, and to repent of his past enormities, and to present himself at the Lord's Table with heart-felt penitence, if he was not moved by this reference to our Lord's last supper with His disciples? It would be impertinent to say that S. Paul acted in the wisest way possible; but I think we may say

that the wisdom of his conduct approves itself to our judgment, and that also it gives the clergy of our own days a hint as to the best method which they can adopt in dealing with this very momentous subject.

I need hardly say to you, Christian Brethren, that for the most part the evil, with which the clergy in these days have to contend, is as different as possible from that which troubled S. Paul. I do not mean to say that there are none who profane the Lord's Table by treating it as a common table, who are weak and sickly, and perhaps fallen into spiritual sleep, because they do not discern the Lord's body. I know that the careless worldly lives of some of those, who go to the Lord's Table pretty regularly, is a tremendous stumbling-block in the way of weak, timid, conscientious brethren; and therefore there is still reason to entreat men to judge themselves, that they be not judged of the Lord; but this is not the besetting evil of the age; *the* evil of modern times, so far as this subject is concerned, is the carelessness with which people regard the whole question; the common evil is, not that men and women and children flock to the Lord's Table as though they need have no fears in coming, but that they stay away altogether as though the feast were no feast for them. Now what is to be done

in such a case? I reply, do as S. Paul did: go back to the original institution: remind men of that as simply and plainly as you can: if anything will move them, that will: if they are really open to conviction, that will convince them: if they know and understand the part which Christ Himself has in this great matter, and still neglect it, then I do not believe that there is any argument, or any way of putting the question, or any power of eloquence, that will have any beneficial effect. Indeed, I should be very sorry to think that persons, who could not be moved by what Christ did, could be moved by anything that we can do; or that persons, who are not moved by His words, could be moved by any words of ours. Therefore, for my part, I would ever put the question on the same ground as that on which S. Paul put it; I would say, "Thus and thus did our Lord Jesus Christ; this is His wish; this is His command. Now do as you think right; do as you think best; do as you think most Christian."

Nor is this the whole of the lesson, which I would gather from S. Paul's mode of treating this subject. I think that the method, which he adopted for stirring up unworthy Christians to a sense of their unworthiness, is also the best method of enlightening the minds and quickening the affections of the worthiest and the best. I will take

it for granted that there are many persons, who shrink from the thought of dishonouring Christ, either by turning away from His Table, or by going to it unworthily. Well, my Christian Brethren, what course can you pursue which is most likely to lead you on towards perfection, to make you appreciate, more than you do, the privilege which is yours, and the blessing which that privilege involves? Shall you sorrow for past sins? Shall you make vows for the future? Shall you pray against temptation? Shall you examine and judge yourselves? Yes: you should do all these things; but above all, I would have you ever to recur to the history of the institution of the Holy Eucharist, as the best commentary upon its meaning, and the best guide to the Altar. Think of your Saviour looking forward through the dark night of His agony to His passion on the morrow; think of Him amongst His disciples, and with the traitor still in the number; think of His pain and grief, and of the heavy burden which then lay upon His shoulders; and think too of the joy which thrilled His heart, when He considered that His work would soon be accomplished, and the redemption of man complete; and then think of Him instituting this blessed feast, saying to you and to all His disciples, under such circumstances as these, "Do this in remembrance of Me: this

bread is My broken body: this wine is My shed blood." What can you add to this? You may add no doubt commentaries and explanations and arguments and discussions, which shall fill libraries, and weary scholars, and furnish controversies to the end of time; but, looking to the thing as a matter of practical duty, as that which Christians are to do in remembrance of Christ, and not merely to argue about, what can you add to that which I have just now quoted? I am persuaded that you can add nothing which will give the argument more strength, and I am persuaded that you can find no better commentary upon the doctrine of the Lord's Supper.

For after all, Christian Brethren, it is a practical thing. We can never do much more than gain a faint glimpse of the truth; all our views will be imperfect; all our attempts at explanation like the babbling of children; the wise man and the ignorant are much on a par; the clergyman and the layman cannot differ much; every one must recur at length to Christ's own words and deeds, and say, "Christ did this, Christ commanded this." And O! if the words of Christ be truth, what blessing may not be expected by him, who takes Christ at His word, and who can say, as he eats the bread and drinks of the cup, "I do this, in remembrance of Jesus Christ my Lord"?

SERMON XXIV.

FAREWELL TO CAMBRIDGE.

REVELATION iii. 20.

Behold I stand at the door and knock.

THESE are words of our Saviour Christ. They are not, as indeed I need hardly tell you, words spoken by Him while on earth; but they are words in which He addressed Himself to S. John, when S. John was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and saw visions of unspeakable things, and received messages for the Churches. They are, however, thoroughly in accordance with all that Christ spoke while He was yet with us. There is in them the same spirit of humility and gentleness and longsuffering; the same desire that men, for their own sakes, should receive Him into their hearts and follow His ways; the same unwillingness that any should perish; the same spirit as that which the Saviour declared to be His own, when He spoke of the Son of Man having "come to seek

and to save that which was lost." Hence such words as those which I have taken for a text must be at all times worthy of our most devout attention. Christ speaks in them to every human heart; and it is for each human heart to ask itself honestly, whether it has listened to Christ's words, and whether it has opened the door when it has heard Christ without.

Now I have a particular reason for selecting for my text the words which I have read to you; but before I say anything about that reason, I wish to draw your attention to two or three points in the text itself, in order that you may not fail to perceive the emphasis, with which it addresses itself to us.

In the first place I would have you to realise the picture which is presented to us of Christ standing without and knocking at the door. Whose gain is it, if the door be opened? and whose loss is it, if the door remain shut? One naturally supposes that a person, who comes to the door of another and knocks for admittance, has some end to gain; he has a favour to ask; or he comes to prove his respect. If he had an announcement to make of great profit and joy, he would not need (one would think) to stand and knock; a message would be enough. People are usually keen in listening to messages, when there is anything for

them to gain. The peculiarity of the text then is, that in it all this is entirely reversed : Christ comes to the door and knocks, not because He has anything to gain, but because he who dwells within the house has everything to lose. That message of good news, which Christ came upon earth to declare, He is represented as pressing upon the attention of mankind by earnest personal appeal ; He comes himself—"Behold *I* stand at the door"—and He who has everything to give stands outside in the cold night air, entreating that the door may be opened, in order that he who dwells in the house may be blessed with His own presence.

And there is, I think, a persistency in His work of kindness implied by the language of the text. "Standing, and knocking," does not mean knocking just once, and then passing on. You may remember the manner in which Peter's knocking at the house of Mary the mother of John, after his escape from prison, is described : first he knocked, and the damsel went to the door, and when she heard Peter's voice, she ran in and told how Peter stood before the gate ; and then we read that Peter "continued knocking" ; and this is what I conceive to be implied in the language of the text. Christ "continues knocking," how long I do not say ; but He continues with much patience, as though He were unwilling to believe that any

human soul could be so infatuated as to keep the door closed while He is standing without. Moreover, the whole phraseology is expressive of great humility: "Behold I *stand*"—you within may be taking your ease and enjoying yourselves, but I *stand* without,—you may be forgetting in the midst of your business and your pleasures how short the time is, but I stand without and cannot forget,—you may have forgotten what I said about watching, but I know too well the necessity of doing so; and therefore I stand here and watch; and every now and then I knock at the door, to see whether there be yet any hope of its being opened.

But again, you must observe that the language of the text tells us something very important concerning those who dwell in the house, at the door of which Christ is represented as knocking. Why does He knock at all? Why not go in at once? Surely He has the right of entrance if any one has; surely He has purchased for Himself the house and all that it contains, and can only regard it as rebellion if the door be kept closed. Yes, Christian Brethren, Christ *has* the right of entrance, and it is nothing short of rebellion to close the door against *Him*; but nevertheless the door is there, and men can close it if they will, and can secure it by such bolts and bars as Christ will not break.

I know that some persons have held that Christ makes forcible entrance (so to speak) into human hearts, that He chooses some and takes them as His whether they will or not, and that He allows others to do as they please and in reality does *not* choose *them*. I believe that the language of the text better represents the truth; Christ does not break bolts and bars, if they be used to exclude Him; He stands at the door and knocks—that is His mode of operation; He represents the gain of admitting Him, the loss incurred by excluding Him; He will not take one refusal; He knocks patiently, and stands in that royal humility which belongs in its fulness only to Him; and then, if after all men will not admit Him, He is content to stay without. The responsibility is with them, and they will know one day how great has been their loss; and when they do know this, they will feel and will be constrained to confess, that no one has been to blame except themselves.

Once more: in order thoroughly to appreciate the language of the text, you ought to consider the character of the persons to whom it was spoken. The words of the text form part of a letter to a Church, the members of which (if we may suppose that the language addressed to the angel or bishop of the Church is intended to describe

the general character of the Church itself,—the members of which were (I say) in what is called a “lukewarm” condition. The Lord in speaking to this Church uses that remarkable language which we must all remember, and in which He says He wishes the Laodiceans were either hot or cold; and He pronounces a very terrible curse upon them, because they were neither the one nor the other, but only “lukewarm.” I have no intention of entering into a discussion of the spiritual condition of this Church; but I wish you to observe that it was with reference to persons in this state of lukewarmness that the language of the text was chiefly used. When the Lord speaks of standing at the door and knocking, He does not refer apparently to such a knocking at the door of the heart as we may imagine to be sometimes produced by conscience after the commission of some great crime, neither on the other hand does He refer to such a knocking as we may suppose to demand an entrance for Christ into the hearts of little children, when they are baptized in His Name. No; the case especially contemplated is that of persons, who are members of His Church and not altogether discreditable members, persons who are not cold in the sense of being altogether indifferent to the claims which God has upon them, and to the blessings which He has in store

for those who love Him, and who yet are not hot, not really in earnest, not persuaded that all the efforts they can make will be well disposed, if only they can win Christ and be found in Him: they are neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm; and Christ represents Himself as standing and knocking at these lukewarm hearts, willing to turn to good account the warmth that is left, unwilling that coldness should creep over the body more and more, until it becomes the chill of death.

These remarks must suffice, Christian Brethren, as a commentary upon the text; now I pass on to say something to you in connection with the special circumstances, under which I preach to you this evening. I feel myself placed in a position of considerable difficulty: owing to circumstances,* I am compelled to take my leave of Cambridge as the scene of my parochial ministrations, not in my own Church, but in this: instead therefore of seeing chiefly my own people round me, and saying farewell (so to speak) in the midst of my own family, I am compelled to bring my public ministry to a close in the midst of this great congregation, of which a large number must be, comparatively speaking, strangers. Many things which it might have been fitting for me to

* S. Edward's Church was in process of being repaired and reseated. This sermon was preached in Great S. Mary's

say in my own Church, it would be unfitting for me to say here; I am forced by the nature of the case to take such a general view of the topics which I introduce, as shall be suitable for this congregation, to whom I am called upon by God's Providence to preach. Well, then, Christian Brethren, I have chosen for my text this evening some words which lead me to speak of the manner, in which Christ stands and knocks at the hearts of those who are neither hot nor cold: I do not mean to assert that that description applies to the whole of this congregation, or to them more than to others; but I think that there are certainly a very large number of regular church-goers, to whom the description does in some measure apply; and it is specially they, who cannot but feel that it does apply to them, to whom I would wish to leave as a legacy the words of Christ in the text, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." They who come to Church cannot fairly be described as cold, they would not come to Church if they were; but are there not a vast number, who equally cannot be described as hot,—I do not mean hot in the sense of being enthusiastic and visionary in matters of religion, but hot in the sense of earnest zeal and thorough determination to walk wholly in God's ways? Are there not many who go on from year to year at a quiet jog-trot pace of re-

spectable indifference, never shewing any real warmth in their piety, serving God as much as they think their safety requires, but not caring to walk with God for His own sake, and to live above the world, and to press on towards that mark of perfection, which Christ Himself set up for His people? Nay, Christian Brethren, is there any one of us, who does not feel within himself tendencies in this lukewarm direction, who is not constrained to admit that the danger of falling away from that high standard of Christian life, which he knows to be the right standard, is precisely the danger, which of all others he has most cause to fear? For the greater number of us there is no danger of actual apostacy; we are in no fear of renouncing Christ; and we do not look upon it as in any way probable, that we shall ever be tempted to give ourselves wholly and unreservedly to the world, the flesh, and the devil. The real danger is that of being reduced to the condition of indifference, of which Christ speaks as worse than being cold: we may fall into this by little and little; we may be in it, and yet hardly aware that we are so; nay, we may sometimes be so deceived as to our real condition, that we may be such as the Laodiceans were, and yet maintain that we are such as Christ wishes us to be. Therefore let no one feel himself aggrieved

that I should make use on this occasion of words of our Lord, which were specially addressed to those who were neither hot nor cold; rather let us consider how truly it may be said of all those who attend God's house, that in a variety of ways Christ stands at their door and knocks.

For instance, it may be said of those prayers in which we join when we come to Church, and of those portions of Scripture which are read to us, that by them Christ knocks at our hearts. The best words are constantly put into our mouths, the most solemn utterances of God's Word are constantly sounded in our ears; like all other sounds, these may cease to be audible, if we allow our minds to be listless; but certainly I cannot conceive that in any way Christ could call us more effectually, or bring before our minds more vividly those truths which it concerns us to know. And O! what a privilege it is to any one who diligently attends his parish church, to have there brought before him in a complete and regular cycle all the great truths of the Christian faith! The teaching which a man gains from the Church services can scarcely be partial and incomplete. Christmas, the Epiphany, Lent, Passion-week, Easter, Ascension Day, Whitsunday, have each their tale to tell; all the work of Christ comes before his eyes; in the language of S. Paul, Jesus

Christ is “manifestly set forth, crucified amongst us;” it is not this view of Christianity or that view upon which he is encouraged to dwell, but Christ Himself. And if Christ be present with His Church, as we believe that He is, then we may speak of Him as using the Church services for the purpose of bringing Himself before the minds of those who come to worship, and of deepening in their minds the knowledge of Himself, and of stirring them to more earnest life and more diligent walking in His ways.

Then again, Christ knocks at the door of lukewarm hearts by means of those sermons which His servants preach in His Name. There is, I think, in our days, as perhaps there ever has been, a tendency in one way too much to honour sermons, and in another too much to despise them: men honour them too much when they run about to hear them, and they despise them too much when they hear them without attending to them; as long as the world lasts this will be so; but whatever men may think about them or say about them, we should ever remember that in them Christ is knocking at the door of lukewarm hearts, and endeavouring to gain an entrance. Sunday after Sunday the knock of Christ may be heard; and if men only would remember that it is Christ who knocks, that the message is His message, and the

Minister who delivers it His Minister, and the loss theirs if they do not attend, the results of our preaching would be much more hopeful than they are. As it is, we know very well that a vast portion of what we say verifies the parable of the Sower, some falling on stony places, some by the wayside, and some amongst the thorns.

Once more: I may not omit the call to greater earnestness, which lukewarm hearts receive from the administration in the Church of the Sacraments of Christ. You may say that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper has nothing to do with lukewarm people, that they are all gone to their homes before the celebration of the mysteries begins: but I would have you to observe, that, putting out of the question the possibility of persons being present at the Holy Communion, who are more or less in that lukewarm condition of which I have been speaking, the celebration of the Lord's Supper is one of the most emphatic sermons to careless people that is ever preached within the walls of a Church. If there were no such mysteries as this, people might be contented and easy with that partial attendance on divine worship which is now so common; they might think that prayers and sermons were everything, and they would have no uneasy feeling concerning the existence of a Christian privilege, which they

never enjoyed and which they virtually despised ; but, from time to time, there is exhortation to Holy Communion ; the special service of Christ's Church is celebrated ; that one only form appointed by Himself of keeping His blessed death in remembrance is brought prominently before His disciples, and they are exhorted, as they love Him and as they love their own souls, to join in the sacrament which Christ instituted. And when this is so, can there fail to be something of an uneasy feeling in the minds of those who refuse to come ? Surely that heart must be very callous, which does not on such occasions feel some pang of shame, and make a determination that some time or another it will endeavour to do better things. Yes, in this sacrament Christ stands at the door and knocks ; and most true it is, that, if any one will hear His voice and open the door, Christ will come in, and sup with that man, and make Him enjoy all His presence.

In such ways as these, Christian Brethren, our Lord Jesus Christ may be regarded as knocking at the doors of the hearts of those, who nominally own their allegiance to Him, but practically do not yield that full and entire obedience which He has a right to claim. Of course I by no means limit the agency of Christ to those modes which I have described : I know very well that there are

many other ways in which Christ knocks at our hearts, and some of them quite as effectual as those to which I have referred. I know that the operations of the Spirit are manifold, and that all the dealings of God's Providence, whether they tend in the direction of prosperity or in that of adversity, may be regarded as so many knockings at the doors of our hearts, and so many appeals to us to permit a more complete communion with Him, who is the Resurrection and the Life of our souls. A stroke of sickness, or the loss of a child, or any one of those blows which come upon us sometimes when we least expect them, may be most truly regarded as a call from Christ, a knocking at the door of the heart, a warning concerning the shortness of time and the importance of eternity, a summons to earnest consideration of the kind of life we have lived, and the manner in which we have prepared ourselves to meet Christ. I by no means wish to put in a secondary place this view of the dealings of God with us, and of the manner in which Christ knocks at the door of the heart: but at this present time my thoughts are directed into a somewhat different channel. In bringing my Cambridge ministry to a close, I have to consider, not what God may have wrought amongst my people by other means, but what He hath wrought by *me*. I have to

consider what has been the general effect of those services in which it has been my privilege to lead them, and of those exhortations which it has been my duty to deliver from time to time in the name of Christ, and of those Sacraments which it has been mine to administer, and in which many of us have, I trust, enjoyed the presence of God. I have to consider all this; but if I am asked, what *hath* God wrought, I dare not attempt an answer: the last day will shew what has been done: in that day it will be seen, which of those, at whose door Christ has knocked, have opened their doors gladly, and which have closed them to their own infinite loss. But, believe me, Christian Brethren, that all that I said in the opening of this sermon concerning the spirit in which Christ stands at the door, concerning the continued patience with which He knocks, concerning the possibility of keeping the door closed if men are so disposed,—that all this is still true. Christ does stand knocking at each human heart; it is His earnest desire, it is that for which He shed His own most precious blood, that He should be admitted into full communion with every soul that He has redeemed, that He should not be kept at a distance, that coldness and backwardness should be done away, and that the human soul and He should be entirely united in one. Then

why is it not so? It is because human hearts shut the door against Him; He comes to them in unspeakable humility, stands like a poor messenger from heaven and humbly knocks, and waits to perceive whether His knock is attended to: and He hints meanwhile what good things He has in store, if men will cordially receive Him and make Him their companion: and the proposals sound promising enough, and when He asks, in the interval of knocking, in that solemn voice of His, "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" the human heart cannot fail to nod acquiescence, and say, "What indeed can it profit?" But then there are other voices which drown the voice of Christ; and there are other friends who knock as loudly as He, and profess that they have as much claim for admission, and promise that if only they be admitted the human soul shall want nothing more. Is not this so, Christian Brethren? do we not all perceive that there are other voices outside our door besides that of Christ; voices of this world, which are pleasant, it may be thought, as long as they last, but which soon die away and leave us in disappointment and dark night? and do we not feel how apt we are to be beguiled, how much power the world has over our hearts, how often the voice of Christ is rendered inaudible by voices, which

ought *not* to be heard when He is pleased to speak? It is so, it is so, Christian Brethren; and I think that the best thing I can say to you is this, that if you perceive and know that it is so, if you acknowledge your frailty, if you confess on your knees with real contrition your sense of your weakness, you may then look to God for strength, and trust that He will not leave you, but will bring you closer to Himself.

Christian Brethren, I must say farewell. The sound which it hath pleased Christ to raise by my ministry in this place has come to an end. I have no desire to bring forward into public those feelings, which, if they be deep, can only be indulged in secret: but in the retrospect of my teaching in Cambridge I will venture to say as much as this. I have ever desired that no one should be able with any justice to assign me to any extreme school of doctrine: to my own apprehension there are errors in all extremes, and I think they may all be avoided: what I have desired to do is to preach Christ, in the way in which it is the privilege and duty of every clergyman of the Church of England to preach Him. I have thought that of all human expositions of the Gospel, the Book of Common Prayer is the fullest and the best. I find there no narrow view of Christ. I do not find, for instance, Sacraments

exaggerated so as to hide Him who is the life of them, nor put virtually in the background under the notion of honouring Him: I find all orderly and well arranged, and the parts in mutual subordination: above all, I find throughout a tone of sober practical godliness, language of which quietness and confidence is the strength, confessions and prayers which bring faith into connection with every-day work and bind religion up with the things of common life. According to this method I have endeavoured to teach; and when I am gone, I trust that no one will find it possible to connect my name with any of those symbols of party, which distract and ruin our Church. I trust that no one will be able to say of me, he was High Church, or Low Church, or Evangelical, or Tractarian, or in any way to affix a nickname to my ministry and me; rather let them say, he endeavoured to preach Christ as he found Him in the Scriptures, and as a faithful son of the Church of England was pledged and bound to preach.

And now, Christian Brethren, I go to another sphere of duty. I ask your prayers that God may give me His grace in that position to which I am called. Be assured that *I* can never forget the many kindnesses and marks of love which I have received here. My earnest prayer is, that

as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so you may grow up in Him, until you attain to perfect manhood, even to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

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